

# THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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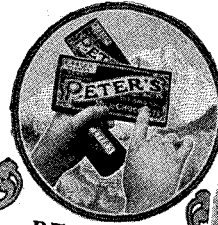
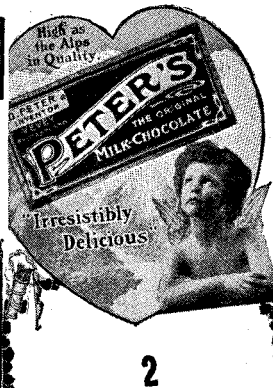
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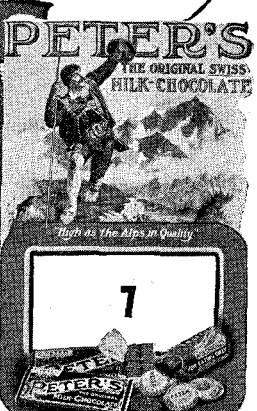
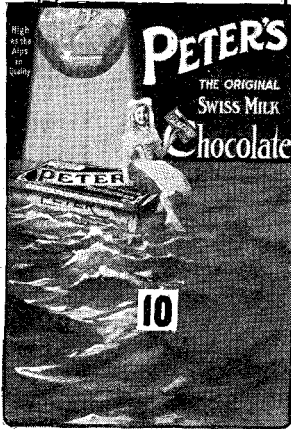
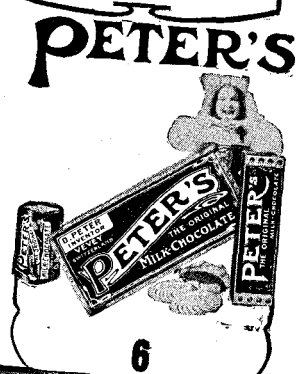
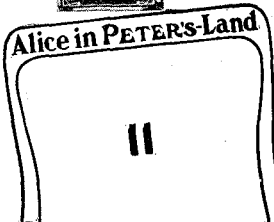
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# BONDAGE

By Edna Kenton

IT was one rainy evening at Francesca Dwight's that Amy Crawford struck her little coterie of women friends almost dumb with her blunt statement that she was intending to marry the old lover, after all, and that within the month. It was Francesca's evening, and it happened somehow, that, of the five who dropped in, all were women. They were all women, too, who "did things." Francesca was a poster artist of ability and deserved fame. The slender woman who had been at the piano all evening, playing and singing as fancy bade her, had a grand-opera future dazzlingly near her. Isabel Blair was a newspaper woman of years' standing and experience. Beth Morris wrote, as did Elinor Darling, as did Amy. Up to the moment Amy made her brief announcement the evening had passed hilariously.

If some curious fancy had not led Germaine Taft, at the piano, to croon softly the melody of the Elsa bridal hymn, Amy would have doubtless, for that evening at least, kept to her firm resolve to be married before she announced any part of her affairs to any friends. But the rainy night, the bridal song, impulse, and the convenient presence of the five women who meant more to her than all her friends together, brought her to confession.

She smiled a little at the silence which met her. She was standing in the curve of Francesca's baby grand, her elbows planted squarely on its top, and her firm chin sunk deep in her hands. Somehow she found herself staring straight into Germaine's eyes

when she told them all. For a second Germaine's fingers lingered over some chords. Then she went on to the end of the crooned melody, as she had done all evening. Even with Amy's keen, dark eyes on her, there seemed no vital need for her to speak. She had hardly spoken all evening, save in song.

"I have met Evan Kilvert rather recently," observed Isabel Blair smoothly—she was the first to speak. "I consider him eminently qualified to make any reasonable woman happy."

Another pause fell, deeper after Miss Blair's words than after Amy's. Amy's eyes had left Germaine's, and she was now engaged in following the salient lines of a new Dwight poster, but she was not oblivious of the second silence. Her lips curved again in a tiny smile.

Elinor Darling spoke at last. She was a sharp-featured, black-eyed little morsel of a woman, with an appalling gift for saying terrifying things, and a faculty for making enemies that amounted to positive genius. "I'd do a good deal," she said bluntly, "but I declare, Amy, I'd stop short of such a piece of spite work!"

"Elinor!" murmured Francesca, shocked. This was Elinor Darling's star bit of daring.

Amy's rather fixed smile rippled into a careless laugh. "We all know what we all know," she said lightly. "Let Elinor alone. But I've tried everything else in the vain pursuit. Now I'm resolved on marriage." Her eyes went swiftly back to Germaine Taft.

"I wish," bravely ventured Beth, the poet, "that I could really believe, Amy, that you are one of the women who ever ought to be married."

Amy, watching Germaine, saw her eyes wander for one brief second from Francesca's beautiful Henner to Beth's anxious face, and then go quickly back to their evening-long contemplation of the wonderful shoulder lines and the tantalizing auburn hair.

"Amy," said the good Francesca gently, "is a woman to make home a delight—if she loves the man she marries, loves him to self-abnegation—not otherwise."

Amy Crawford laughed again. "All you girls mean well," she said mockingly. "Let the farce die now. I can see that in your minds success or failure will rest on my poor shoulders. I wonder—if anything happens—if you'll blame Evan, any of you?"

She sunk her chin even deeper into her hand, and turned her eyes once again upon Germaine Taft, who met her gaze at last. Amy's face paled suddenly. She dropped her hands and straightened her slight figure to its full height.

"I swear to you, I'd help it if I could, girls!" she said, her voice suddenly hoarsened. "I've got my doubts myself. But I'm driven, driven to it."

"If you only meant that the right way, Amy Crawford!" said Elinor Darling, with fierce energy. "The way I'll have to mean it, if I'm ever married—then I'd say Godspeed and marry him tomorrow. But you don't. You're a selfish pig, Amy. You take all the risks of ruining his life for a chance in a billion of drowning your own unhappiness. You'd have meant it once, the right way—with the wrong man. You may thank your stars you couldn't fling yourself away on Bertie Vawtry. But with Evan Kilvert—the downright good sort he is—pah! the blindness of these men! Does he imagine he's getting you on anything higher than a money basis; that if he were poor, you'd—?"

Amy had straightened slowly, as

Elinor's shrill, fierce voice rushed headlong. She listened, seemingly with deep interest and infinite curiosity, as to what the dark little woman might dare at last to say. Already her words had touched deep on hidden things. Yet the tiny smile had not left Amy's lips—until she turned suddenly toward the piano and the player.

"Gerry!" she whispered. "For God's sake, not that!"

Germaine's fingers stopped midway in their playing. By merest chance she was running through the throbbing viola melody of the Eighth Symphony. Her eyes rested for a scant two seconds on Amy's white face. Then she wheeled about at last and faced the room. She was a wonderfully beautiful woman, the sort of woman who fills a room with her presence, visible and invisible.

"I've got something to tell you, too, girls," she said quietly. "You'll be surprised. In three weeks I'm going to be confirmed, in Father Crowley's church."

Then stillness did settle upon the room and the women in it. It was Elinor Darling, of course, who first found voice to fling fierce protest.

"What has driven you to such madness and frumpery tricks?" she demanded. "Is the world going mad together?"

"I'll tell you," said Germaine Taft seriously. "I've merely got to do it. Perhaps you know the Church's attitude on divorce—that it doesn't grant it—doesn't recognize it. I was brought up in a convent, you know. Those Catholics know what they're about when they take their own and the Protestant young early. You can't ever get away from the feel of it, whatever sort of fool you tell yourself you are. Well, the point is this: if I don't fling myself into the Church I'll find myself married ten times over, and I can't afford to wreck my career that way. It wouldn't mean wreckage to a good many women, but I take things too seriously while they last—and I'm free once more, thank God!"

"Bob Taft was a brute!" agreed Elinor Darling genially. "And so this is your advanced—I should say medieval—method of escaping Frank Hawthorne."

"I've had enough of it," said Germaine Taft. "I don't want marriage. And yet— You see, I should never dare marry a man I couldn't escape if need arose, and if I go into the Church I know I'll have enough superstitious awe of any priest alive——"

"Oh, priests!" sneered Elinor Darling.

Mrs. Taft's eyes flashed just once. "Don't use that sort of tone, Elinor," she said. "It'll make me downright angry."

She turned back to the piano, her fingers gliding through some old Gregorian chords. There was a little pause; then Francesca spoke, gently enough, and in a few moments the room was left to Germaine and Amy, the others having drifted kitchenward.

Amy leaned suddenly far across the piano. "You're the only one of the old girls who's tried it, Gerry," she said swiftly; "tried that awful thing, marriage. Am I a fool?"

Mrs. Taft's eyes flashed straight into her friend's. "Amy, that depends," she said. The words were trivial, almost flippant, but the tone was clean cutting as a sword blade. Under its hidden thrust Amy Crawford winced.

She stood, fingering some loose sheets of music that lay on the piano. Her face paled and flushed by turns. She did not raise her eyes to her friend's again.

"Yes, that depends!" she said, almost harshly. Then she laughed a little, and strolled out to Francesca's tiny kitchen.

"I'm coming, girls," she called. "Drop your old-cat talk till later!"

## II

For all of eleven years, ever since she was sixteen, Amy Crawford had lived the happy life of the born wanderer she was. Her father had been a

man with many gifts and little money, whose wife had died when Amy was twelve years old. He had cared for her as he had cared for the mother—that is to say, not at all. When she was sixteen he married again, and she never entered his house from the day her stepmother came into it. It was not because of passionate love and jealousy for her dead mother, or for her living father, that she showed such animosity toward the new wife. She merely resented this usurping of her rights as head of her father's erratically ordered house, and she was a firm believer in all the traditional saws of stepmotherhood. Without stopping to reason—she never reasoned till too late, then or ever—she simply announced her decision to leave her father's house the day the new wife entered it. There was a little money coming to her from her mother's slender estate, which her father made over to her then, and with it she made her moth-like flight to the city. It did not last her long, but it lasted long enough for her to gain a foothold, and later a native ability enabled her to keep it.

When she found herself settled in her first hall bedroom, not even its dinginess and chill damped her ardor. She was half-frightened and wholly charmed at the enticing necessity that confronted her, of earning her own living, of being independent. She tried newspaper work, space work at first, and later a regular position as general reporter, a place which horrified and delighted her by turns with its varied glimpses of life. By and bye she graduated from that work into a position as reader for a publishing house, and wrote, almost nothing which she signed by her own name, but which sold well, and brought her, all in all, a good deal of money. But she was a beggar always. When she had money she spent it like a prince, and her last dollar went more royally than her first. Her one method of economy was to do without things when she could not buy them. She made friends rapidly, and

most of them she kept. She had some beauty, but she had more charm. She was a small woman, yet she gave the impression of height because of her royal carriage. Her hair was warm chestnut and her eyes were brown, and her skin seemed to have caught some drops of their brown coloring, to add to its warm creaminess. And never were cheeks or lips redder with nature's color than were Amy Crawford's during those hard, happy first years. After several years of sifting and re-sifting, six women of them settled into a sort of clannish circle which was always more or less together, and to which other additions must subscribe *in toto*.

She was just eighteen when Evan Kilvert first came into her life. She had dazzled him from his first sight of her, self-contained young lawyer though he was. All one evening he watched her at a restaurant, as she dined with a man he knew. Her mass of warm brown hair fascinated him, the way it grew upward from her beautiful neck, and waved about her temples and her forehead. The warm lights of her brown eyes and the red of her cheeks and lips filled him with a mild and delicious fever. Others gathered about the two, and at last his friend caught sight of him as he dined at his solitary table, and motioned him over. Kilvert had obeyed the welcome gesture with but one thought, that he was to meet her.

The meeting came opportunely, for just then there happened to be no other special man—Amy had always and would always have her special man. Kilvert had filled in well just at first. Later he became interesting to her because of himself. Amy had consorted with many varied types during her two years of metropolitan life, but all of them could be grouped under the common heading of social vagabonds. Some of them had taught her good and some of them had not, but from all of them she had absorbed ideas, and, such as they were, ideals. Such a man as Kilvert was, conventional, accurately informed, aristocrat

in birth and breeding, and yet most truly democratic, in that much abused word's highest sense, a man who, not primarily because he cared for her, but because she was first and always a woman, gave her homage and courtesy and honor—such a man had never come into her life before. These social vagabonds she knew—they, too, gave her homage, but it was of different bouquet. For a time Kilvert, desperately earnest and desperately downright, swept her up part of the way to his level. She needed it, for her manner of life was deteriorating, and had so affected her in these two years. Finally, simply because she had drifted so far with him that she had lost her foothold, she allowed him to understand they were engaged.

It happened that just then she was doing her screaming specials for the Sunday edition of her paper. Kilvert detested that sort of work for her, and had succeeded in making her feel a part of its cheapness; but she seemed curiously averse to the hastening of their wedding day, which was always his solution of the vexed question. He was by no means of the Bluebeard type, however, and he was tolerant of the vagaries of the modern woman, even though he pronounced them vagaries and dreamings. He did not therefore definitely protest, until, one Sunday, he picked up the *Cry*, and read, in shrieking red letters, "My Seven Days and Nights in an Insane Asylum," signed by Polly Pry.

That morning Kilvert was angry. He remembered Amy's explanation by letter of an enforced absence of one week from town for her paper, a letter which was not candid, to put the most liberal construction upon it. She had not precisely lied, but she had by no means told him the truth. He detested her "Polly Pry" manoeuvres and the sensationalism attendant upon them. He loathed the thought of her, girl that she was, being spoken of by her editors as eligible because of her daring and nerve, for hanging assignments and interviews with murderers and the like. He had not seen her

for over a week, and she had not announced her return to him, either, but he went around to her tiny apartment that afternoon. He found it crowded, and she was fertile in expedients for warding off undesired solitudes; so Kilvert, annoyed and resentful, left at last when the revelry was at its height, leaving her annoyed and resentful also. Everyone there had praised her work, had called her a good fellow, had patted her on the back, metaphorically and literally, save Kilvert only.

That episode blew over, but the next discovery that Kilvert made roused him to deeper wrath. It was merely this, that Amy, for the sake of a good story, had joined a detective agency's working force, and was collecting material galore through her experience thereon. This time Kilvert made what Amy hotly called a scene, but he carried his point, and she dropped the work, a victory for him which rankled in her mind. Again he urged their immediate marriage, and again; and finally, in a moment of deepest irritation, Amy gave him in full her reasons for desiring to postpone it. Kilvert might have very excellent prospects; but she would not marry on prospects, unless, indeed, she were to carry on her newspaper work. This condition Kilvert would not listen to. He had stern, old-world ideas on the subject of wives working on salaries.

The end came at last, after almost a year of constant pulling and mutual irritation, over a small table in a tiny Italian restaurant where Amy had insisted on taking Kilvert, in preference to his own selection of a quiet, conventional, uptown place. Perhaps, if Amy had not insisted on carrying that one point; perhaps if Kilvert had not yielded it, the engagement would have stood for a time longer, at least. But Kilvert was sick of a cheap bohemianism which he did not enjoy, and Amy, still young and fresh to life, professed to loathe convention and its bonds. Kilvert could not eat the foreign dinner which was served them, while

Amy exclaimed in delight over every course. At last her forced and solitary delight changed to anger, and the end came even before Kilvert put her into a cab and gave the man her number. He sat beside her, indeed, during the drive, but his last word had been said, and he listened in silence to hers, fitting sentiments under the circumstances, but somewhat parrot-like in quality.

After that they did not meet for eight years. Residents of the same great city, where chance meetings come so oddly, they alone seemed not to run into each other. With Kilvert there had been no other woman. He had been grievously hurt in his affair with Amy, but the hurt had healed with the passing of time, and he would have vowed that not even the scar remained—until one afternoon, at a matinee, he looked across the crowded house, and saw her, sitting alone.

Their eyes met just before the curtain rose for the second act of the play, "Hedda Gabler." As the house darkened, Kilvert sat back, moved beyond his dreams. After eight years that it should happen so, in such wise! He had come that afternoon to see a great actress play a part that all the critics said was flawlessly suited to her. The play itself was highly repellent to him, but he granted its fine workmanship—granted the theme. Artistically, during the first act, he had been deeply impressed. During the second act he was humanly moved. He listened to the keen, incisive reading of lines that heretofore had been to him merely bright facets of dramatic dialogue, and he saw, for the first time, the soul in them.

When the curtain fell again, he found himself looking straight across the house at Amy Crawford. Conscious of his own graying head, he wondered at the eternal youth that seemed to be hers. She appeared to him quite as young at twenty-seven as at nineteen, and more beautiful. He crushed down the impulse to go over to her—a vacant chair stood be-



side her—but after that one meeting of eyes, she had not glanced his way. Yet he knew without egotism that she was perfectly conscious of his scrutiny.

He sat through the tragedy in profound silence. Often he had doubted that Hedda was anything but an exaggerated fancy of a dramatist's cunning brain. Never before had he thought of Amy Crawford beside that dramatic figure. Somehow the girl's character grew plain and luminous to him this afternoon, as it had never been before. Her unconventionalities became evidences of a great, liberty-loving spirit, rather than things born of pure freakishness as he had felt too many times in those old, impatient days. It seemed to him, as he sat there, and saw the working out of those same impulses repressed—love of liberty, love of action, infinite curiosity about life—that he was looking on Amy as she might have been, living Hedda's life in Hedda's country and environment, deprived of healthy outlets for her activities, outlets which she had deliberately made for herself. He shivered as he thought of such fate for Amy, and then he saw that he had granted her everything. If it were that through her activities she had found salvation, then he must rise up and call them blessed, every one. And, seen through Amy's mirror, even Hedda lost her antagonistic qualities for him, and became human and womanly and pitiable.

The words of Brack, that cynic of the play, rushed irresistibly to his lips a little later, as they met in the foyer and clasped hands as though they had parted yesterday.

"Do people do such things nowadays?" he asked her gravely. Even so near him she seemed hardly a day older—save perhaps her eyes, her mouth—the expressions that they wore.

"They might," she answered instantly. "How are you, Evan? It has been a long time."

"So long that a cup of tea somewhere, or even a very small dinner,

might prove an oddly pleasing diversion?" he suggested.

"It would be diverting, extremely so," she assented frankly. "Make it dinner somewhere. I only breakfasted at noon, and I'm ready, this early, for all the courses, Evan."

She glanced up at him as she spoke, keenly, fleetingly. To her he was not the same. The years had left their marks, not only on the graying hair, but they had lined the face, and deepened the gravity of the eyes, and made even sterner the already firm set of the jaw and mouth. And once again their eyes met in long, straight gaze.

He called a hansom outside and put her into it, and gave the man an order. When they reached their restaurant, Kilvert obtained a choice of tables, secluded and retired. He ordered cocktails first, something he would not have done for her eight years before, save under stiff protest, for he disliked to see women drink in public men's drinks. He remembered that she preferred a Martini to a Manhattan, and he ordered it with two olives. For the rest, from oysters to cheese, he chose every item with special reference to her tastes, remembered for almost a decade. Amy felt her pulse leap with the surprise of it, and then tears rushed to her eyes, for the comfort of it. Life had gone hard with her this past year.

They sat for four hours at their secluded table. They talked to each other as they had never talked before. They had never known each other as they learned to know each other then. Kilvert, as he sat and listened to her, saw the truth, disclosed to him at last for all time, that for him she had been the only woman, that for him there would never be another. He had had to see her again to realize it, had to see that weariness in her eyes which damped their glowing fire, and the almost hard line of her lips, and the smile that hid a quiver. He saw tonight for the first time that she was a woman born to unhappiness as the sparks fly upward; that her temperament was her torment rather than her fault; that, feminine thing as she was,

it was after all a great pity that she had not been born to that heritage of freedom the mere fact of manhood brings with it. He saw tonight, he told himself, that all her reckless words and deeds were mere outward evidences of the eternal duel going on within her soul; that he must always pity her rather than blame her; that whether he blamed or pitied her, he must always love her, and forever protect her, less from the world than from herself—most of all from herself. He seemed to understand her at last; to read her, to be able to reconcile the warring details that made up his knowledge of her.

As for Amy, she found herself yielding to irresistible impulse, telling him bits of her life that showed all too plainly how hopelessly it had lost its savor. She said at last that she was living now merely because she could not die naturally, and she was too great a coward bravely to end it all, even through one of the several painless methods. She told him frankly that she had changed for the worse since he had known her.

Suddenly, Kilvert laid his hand on hers, and hushed her. He began to talk quietly of himself, of his profession, his affairs, his home, his income; all practical matters, some of them things which no woman save a wife or one's betrothed should know. Kilvert would never have talked so to any other living woman—he would have looked on it as mutually degrading. He had every sympathy with any woman's most natural desire and indisputable right to know the truth about a man's affairs as truthfully and convincingly as he would tell her the state of his heart. But there were other ways of enlightening her, many ways. Yet with Amy this seemed the natural way. Lack of money had separated them, more than their undisciplined natures. He knew that, granted all things else, if his worldly affairs were other than they were, that same thing would separate them now. He could never fancy Amy marrying a poor man. He honestly did not believe that she would marry a man

purely for his wealth, but he unreservedly owned that she would never marry a man for his poverty. And, thank God, since he felt curiously certain that he was the one man who could take her and keep her with real understanding of her complex needs, he could offer her every comfort and some luxuries.

"I wanted you to know all this," he said simply, as he stood with her for a moment in the hall of her boarding-house, and saw its dinginess and mediocrity with an aching heart. "You know why, and we need discuss it all no further. But tomorrow I am coming to see you to talk about another matter. I have found you again, and I shall not easily let you go."

Amy went up to her room, her miserable little fourth-floor room, with its makeshift couch and its makeshift screen before the shabby dresser, and stared about it with the angry color leaping high and more fierce in her face. To such straits was she reduced, through her madness of a year and more ago, a madness which had possessed her, made her unfit for her work, which had caused her to draw heavily on her small principal till that, too, had almost failed her. She had been a fool to go to that play this afternoon, to see that woman, with her keen incisive perception of the truth absolute of Ibsen's characterization, play Hedda flawlessly. She, too, as well as the actress, had followed Ibsen through his intricacies, understood the character, sympathized with it, lived it—through all save that last breathless moment, when the pistol-shot rang out. Amy knew she would always fail there, else she long since would have done it, too. Just after it, she had looked into Kilvert's steady eyes, with her own raw soul looking through her own, and saw that he, too, had listened understandingly. At first that fact had been comfort; now, after it was all over and he was gone, it became pain, misery, degradation. Kilvert's comprehension and sympathy and pity stung her pride like white flames. She would have bartered all

that sympathy and understanding for one glance such as he used to give her, of simple respect and honor. Was this the forfeit she was to pay to these years which had intervened!

She cast away her clothes, and pulled out her makeshift couch into its real bed width, and flung herself upon it in angry despair. After eight years it had come to this, that his steadfast purposes had placed him high, and her dreamings had brought her low! All through the years, until of late, mirages of wealth had floated before her eyes to make her happy, even when money was scarcest. But the dreamings had gone now—nothing was left her—save a memory that ached like a raw, uncovered nerve, whose ache had stolen away her youth and her happiness and even her power to dream things vain, but pleasing.

She hardly thought of Kilvert, except to remind herself that under no circumstances was she to say anything but no, when he came the next afternoon. She could not say yes—not with that memory lying so close behind her; not while she shrank from it with agony, and yet could never flee from it; not while she still must lie, whole nights through, remembering! Alas, if Kilvert were but Vawtry, in spite of all, she could say nothing but yes, yes, yes a thousand times!

She did not sleep till the dawn crept in to make grayer her dun room, but not once again did she think of Kilvert. The evening with him was as if it had never been.

But the morning brought sanity and a certain humorous outlook. She found herself, while she was dressing, repeating certain figures which Kilvert had uttered the night before, and they slipped over her tongue as sweet morsels. The morning mail brought her two invitations, both of them delightfully complimentary, both of them requiring clothes. One gown would not answer. It must be two, and each must be perfect of its sort. She frowned as she read the letters over her boarding-house breakfast, and she

went back to her pseudo sitting-room to think it out. She could not refuse them, for the sake of ultimate good resulting, but she must have clothes. She dragged out a pastel-blue broad-cloth gown from its lair, three seasons old, in the mad hope that a princess dress was always in style. But this one was faded and mussed and irretrievably shabby. She took out a black evening frock which she hoped might do, and found that it would not. It would take all of two hundred dollars to make her barely presentable—and she might as well say two thousand for the good it did her. She wondered, as she surveyed the worn finery, if she could possibly induce her dressmaker, whom she had not patronized for many months now, but who owed to her much custom, to give her an extension of credit, for just this once.

But the noon mail brought her from that woman the seventeenth dun for a bill of eighteen months' standing. She was furious at the reminder of the woman's remembrance. No hope there—and that meant no hope anywhere.

An hour later Elinor Darling dropped in, with the cheerful news that at last she was getting forty dollars a week on her paper. Her black morsels of eyes snapped with delight as she told the news, and Amy exulted generously, considering that for a year she herself had not averaged forty dollars a month.

She sank into a fit of blue devils after Elinor had betaken herself and her hideously ugly tailor-made gown off. She knew she was a hundred times cleverer than Elinor Darling; that, lacking one thing, she excelled her in all others. But that one thing, perseverance, was the one essential. Amy could not persevere, could not concentrate. She wrote by moods, by fits and starts, and when inspiration refused to come she was lost. If it had not been for Bertie Vawtry and that whole affair she, too, might have been prosperous at the end of this year, she told herself. But that thing had

crushed her utterly, shamelessly. She had broken beneath the strain of it. Her youth had snapped. No joy in life remained.

Then, and not till then, the thought of Evan Kilvert came to her. She flushed and paled. She had decided the night before to tell him, with her refusal, something of the brutal, shameless truth; as much, at least, as she could tell him. She had a great desire to bare Bertie Vawtry to the eyes of one man, even though she laid bare her own soul in doing it. That, she knew, would end things with Evan, with any man.

She sat down suddenly. She had meant to tell him all the story. She asked herself now why she should—if she should—when she should. She sat with her hands clasped about her knees, wondering, questioning, at a loss. And in the midst of it, before she had found any particle of mind to make up, let alone its decision, Kilvert's card was brought up to her.

### III

SHE married Evan Kilvert within the month. Francesca loaned her apartment, and all the girls were there; Francesca, tender as always, Isabel Blair serenely granting free will choice to all women, Beth ideal as ever, and Elinor even more blunt and dissatisfied. Gerry was there, too, whose confirmation the girls had witnessed only the Sunday before. Amy looked lovelier, perhaps, than she had ever looked in all her life in the wedding-gown which had taken her last cent to purchase.

After she and Kilvert were gone the girls sat down in the disordered, rose-scented place, and talked it all over for the hundredth time. Beth and Francesca were frankly hopeful; Amy's whole bearing seemed so serenely content. Isabel was always optimistic over other people's affairs, being an ardent disciple of the Doctrine of Desire which solves much for oneself, and for others, whether the

latter will or no. Even Elinor was less certainly sneering. Only Germaine had caught the glint of fear lurking far back in Amy's eyes as she glanced once at the man to whom she had just been married. Germaine, too, had looked at Kilvert with a sympathetic fear clutching her own heart. To her he seemed a calm, contained, cold man, eminently just, doubtfully merciful. And Amy—there would be times when all she would leave for a man to show her would be mercy. Unless each cared for the other to the uttermost there was too much of either of them to make their life together other than a hell. But all this Gerry kept loyally to herself. Only of herself she asked the question: "How long, how long?"

The wedding journey lasted just a month. Amy confided to the good Francesca three days after her return to town, when she dropped in from a shopping trip for luncheon, that if it had lasted another seven days she must have screamed and died.

"It's a dreadful thing," she remarked, over the delightful luncheon Francesca joyously set forth, "to be forced by custom to go away with a man you suddenly realize you don't know at all, are in fact a perfect stranger to him and he to you, and to be shut up with that man—alone, mind you—in a stateroom and car compartment and hotel suite, until one of you is brave enough to cry, 'Enough!' Frankly, I was contemplating the worries of divorce versus its delights, when a business telegram ended it, and saved me, and here I am."

It was an interesting fact, indicative of more or less, that Amy had not fallen into the marital habit of the intimate "we" during her month of honeymooning.

"And are you getting settled easily?" Francesca asked, delicately alive to the fact that Amy needed practical matters brought to her notice more than emotional ones.

"Oh, so-so!" said Amy lightly. "Evan has had this house, you know,



for the last five years, and the house-keeper and the butler—he could spare me better than them. Maggie used to be with the Kilverts before the family fortunes declined, and when Evvie's began to rise he imported her from her place of hiding, and she's been with him ever since. As for James—I have the most insane desire to call him 'Jim' some time, just to see him for once stirred out of his sepulchral calm. I told Evan that the night we came home—poor Evvie! It was George Eliot—some woman, anyway—who said more marriages made in heaven were sent to hell through differing senses of humor than for any other cause! I saw what the grounds for my suit would be by and bye. Good Francesca!"

Amy stopped to laugh at her friend's somewhat anxious face, and she thrust her hands recklessly through her hair.

"There!" she breathed. "A single, lone hair got pulled too tight this morning, and is responsible for all this crazy talk! Now I must get home, and see if James will let me inquire what we're to have for dinner. Where's Beth? And Isabel? All gone away? Well, I shall send for you for luncheon some day soon, and when the crowd gets back to town we'll celebrate. Gerry's gone, too? I'm glad—Gerry knows too much. You're much nicer. Good-bye!"

Yet it was six months from her wedding day before Amy Kilvert summoned the "old guard" to her home for dinner. To the girls she had explained elaborately. Evan had never really furnished more than a few rooms—the rest was makeshift. She was re-furnishing as she wished, and that was taking a delightful amount of time. Her Empire drawing-room, for instance, and her wonderfully English dining-room, with its incomparable accessory, James—she showed them through with voluble interest in her results. When the house was quite ready, then they were to come!

It did not quite convince any of them, for they all remembered too well the housewarmings Amy used to give periodically—she moved twice a

year—as soon as she herself was in the new rooms, whether her household goods had arrived or not. The less there was, the greater the success of the evening. Amy's housewarmings had been semi-annual frolics, with a landlady's warning the next morning.

Amy indeed did put off that piece of entertaining until she was ashamed and penitent. For two months after her return she plunged into the house-furnishing with great enthusiasm. She reveled in shopping, and tasted the first delights of the pleasures and the power of wealth. After that, through the late fall, there was a month or two of being entertained and entertaining, all of and by Kilvert's friends, who, after all, were few in number. It was when the first lull came that Amy went to the telephone one morning, and called them up, one by one, the five women, and five out of the host of men.

Wonderfully enough, they could all come—all the women, at least, and it was easy to substitute two names for the two men who could not get out. Then she went down into James's lair to inform him of dinner for twelve that night instead of for two. She made out a menu, with a discriminating taste in wines at which James remarked later downstairs. Then she went back, and, passing the telephone-room, bethought her of letting Kilvert know of this sudden large affair of hers. All her other dinners had been for six—ordinarily she disliked a larger number. She hesitated a moment, and then, feeling sudden inclination, went upstairs to her own room, and shut the door viciously upon an imaginary world.

They did not fit in that night, those friends of her bohemian days, with her Empire drawing-room, and her English dining-room, and James. The dinner was charming, and perfectly served. Whatever her surroundings, Amy might be counted on to pour charm broadcast over it all. Even her splendor had charm; it had even coziness. Perhaps if it had not been for James—and Kilvert at the head of Amy's table—the evening would have been a success.



But as it was, it was rank failure. Leonard Rhodes, who had never failed her before, was dumb as an oyster and uncomfortable as an impaled beetle. Harry Martin was perhaps the only man who rose to the occasion, and that was only because, Amy told herself, he and Kilvert discovered they were both subscribers to the same edition of Dumas's works. Kilvert could talk about books always, and, oddly enough, cared much for poetry and romance.

Harry Martin's brilliant achievement, however, began and closed the list for the evening. No one else felt moved to brilliancy. Perhaps it was because all of them were thinking of Amy's little fourth-floor flat, some two years back, with its blue walls and its white woodwork, with its tiny open fire, and its basket of real wood beside it, always blazing Sunday afternoons. It was a crazy place, with too many pictures about it, of course, and too many pillows—yet never enough pillows when all the crowd was gathered, sitting on the floor because the chairs always gave out with the third ring of the bell. But it had character and many memories. There was a small kitchen, much too confined for two, into which eight or nine crowded regularly for Sunday night tea-making. Leonard Rhodes always opened the beer bottles, and hunted up enough steins and mugs and glasses, the greatest task of all. How could Lennie look other than reminiscent as James punctiliously poured his fine wines? Harry Martin always made the rabbits, and Hastings Keats attended to the oysters, whatever their fashion of serving. Amy reminded him of that over the blue points, and he had failed to respond as spontaneously as he might have done. There had been one night when she had a bucket of them sent up for the evening tea, and Keats had opened them all evening, with a short white petticoat slipped about him for his apron and a towel about his head for his chef's cap. There had never been such an evening for uproarious

hilarity. Yet the mention of it to-night, which had never failed before to provoke reminiscent mirth, was like the solemn presenting of a grinning skull at a feast. They all left early, and gladly. Even Amy, at the last, because they had all failed her, failed them, and became mute.

"What was the matter?" she asked impetuously of Kilvert as the door closed upon the last one of them. She had banished James after the dreadful dinner, and was letting them out herself.

Kilvert looked at her gravely. "Was anything the matter?" he asked deliberately. "Surely James attended to all details."

"Oh—James!" Amy uttered softly. She had to speak it softly, or she should have screamed it. Was there ever such a stupid—stupid—stupid brute! She turned suddenly, and ran up the stairs, away from him, tearing her lace dress at every step. She reached her room and turned her key frantically in its lock. She tried the door even then to make sure it was fast. She went swiftly over to the door leading into Kilvert's room, and shut it softly, and she turned the key softly, terrified, and tried that door, too, and looked more frightened when she found it would not open. She stood against it, listening for the possible sound of Kilvert's steps. She wondered just what she should do if he tapped at the door she had just entered or if he tried the door she had just locked. But no steps came.

She crept at last to a window in her dressing-room, which commanded a view of Kilvert's library and peered through it. That room was already flooded with light. He was there. She could see his long shadow silhouetted against the curtain. She turned back, and, turning, caught her foot in a strip of the lace she had stepped on in her reckless rush upstairs. In a sudden access of fury she tore it from end to end across the bottom of her skirt, and then broke into hysterical sobs and smothered cries.

She was still sobbing when she heard

Kilvert enter his room at last. She drew herself together and waited. She was utterly undecided as to whether to pretend sleep or to refuse him admission. It was not until the fine thread of light beneath the separating door flashed into darkness and she heard the soft sound of the springs adjusting themselves to Kilvert's heavy body, that she realized what was an actual fact, that it was not every night now that Kilvert came in to say good night. She would have resented much his knock that night, but she resented more his unequivocal retiring. She had felt so sure he would try that door and that it would mean something to him, that it must mean something to him. She had never locked it before.

But yonder he lay, inert, probably sinking into instant slumber, totally unaware of any significances, any crises. When morning came he might knock, indeed, and try the door, and find it locked—but what would it mean to him then, in a world flooded with light and sunshine and with the smell of his morning coffee in the air?

She threw herself, dressed as she was, on the bed, and lay there for a few restless moments. At last, impelled by some power, she knew not what, she crept softly across to the dividing door and turned the key silently. Then she went over to her dressing-table and took a reckless dose of bromides. She flung herself again on the bed, this time divested of her evening frock and wrapped in a long, warm dressing-gown. And so, at last, she slept.

#### IV

It had come, the inevitable reaction against marriage. It seemed to Amy, as she opened her dull eyes upon the world the next morning, that she had been putting off that dinner all these months, trying to ward off thereby certain knowledge of what her instinct had told her long ago, that the old order had passed, giving way to a new dispensation which she loathed. She lay in her bed, battling fiercely with

the knowledge. She had tried to shut her eyes for weeks, almost months. She had tried her little tricks of charming with Kilvert, merely to move him and to amuse herself with what used to be potent entertainment, proof of her power over men. But when a man is one's husband such tricks lose their cunning. And they cost her eventually too much. For she invariably wearied before he did, and there was too much to explain or to endure. Besides, she had a curious fear of Kilvert's keen insight into her and she shrank from playing the courtesan in his eyes.

She confessed to herself this morning that, had she known a tithe of the oppressive, all-enveloping bondage of marriage, she would have been brave enough to stay in that hole where Kilvert found her and from where he had raised her—to this. She looked about her luxurious room and then shut her eyes against it. She hated it all. Why had not Gerry told her?—Gerry, who knew. Perhaps with Gerry it had not been the same, however. As Elinor had said, Bob Taft was a brute. Certainly life with a brute would be freer from deadly monotony than life with Evan Kilvert. There must have been heights and depths for Gerry, not dead level, such as her own marriage had always been. Never with Kilvert had she felt the supreme joy of self-surrender which comes with a love that cannot be measured. There had always been between them the eternal duel of the sexes. He had been blind to it, she told herself sneeringly; might, with a little finesse on her part, remain always blind to it. But her eyes were opened now, and she could not close them; and finesse grew suddenly a loathsome thing.

She shivered, and drew the eider-down coverlet closer about her. She was lying where she had thrown herself the night before, on the outside of her bed. During her restless sleep she had reached down for the light covering lying at its foot. She nestled into it shudderingly at the sound of a light tap on her door—Kilvert's tap.

Would he open the door, and should she be sleeping or just awakened?

But the knock was not repeated, nor did the door softly uncloset. Amy waited, tense and still, until she heard him go away, down to a solitary breakfast. She did not dream that her restless tossings had told him she was awake, nor that he knew her silence to be deliberate. There were many things she did not know nor understand about her husband.

During the fortnight following Amy sank deeper and deeper into her mire. Her revolt was bitter and heavy, and she felt no sort of impulse to conceal her misery. She took cowardly refuge in the unfailing headache and the ever-ready "nerves," and absented herself from breakfast always, and from dinner as often as she could compass it.

As for Kilvert, he realized that what he had anticipated had come to pass. He had not married Amy blindly. Neither had he married her analytically, so to speak. The vagaries of mental quibbling were not for him. The psychology of love had no labyrinths for him. To him the simplest thing in all the world was love. One either loved, or one did not.

He had married Amy, knowing that her feeling for him was far removed from what his was for her. He had known that even as early as on that afternoon when he had gone to tell her again that he loved her. He knew her tastes, her love of luxuries, and the sight of the dingy boarding-house hall the night before had filled him with a sort of horror at her present environment. He knew that the world had been treating her badly, and yet, even now, he could not believe that she had married him solely as a means of escape. He had honestly believed that she felt a clinging dependence on him, a real friendship for him, a frank and genuine liking. At all events, she was the one woman the world would ever hold for him and, while he might have desired her with a selfishness so inherent in all men as to be perhaps no fault, he also longed to give her his name so that, thereby,

he might give her those things he could not give her otherwise; servants, horses, dress, jewels, all the dear, lovely things she craved and helplessly worshiped and adored. Because of all these things, not for one reason only, nor yet two, he had urged her to speedy marriage, confident in the ultimate outcome. For he believed he knew her needs.

For these first six months matters had gone fairly well—not altogether smoothly, for he had soon discovered that the lack in her of the passion he felt was a greater thing to contend with than he had reckoned on. It made him ever so slightly self-conscious; very reticent of his love; doubtful, at last, of her reception of it; fearful of wearying her; fearful even of disgusting her with a display of feeling in which she did not share. He was slowly coming to realize that, while love may be a simple thing for a man, it is, for a woman, the most complex of all things. He was growing to feel baffled by the wall of reasonings and analyses and so-called logic of love which she was slowly rearing about her.

During this fortnight of silence and repression and unhappiness following Amy's unfortunate dinner to her bohemian friends, the strain of that dinner grew on him. He had merely felt at the time that it was a stupid thing, as it undoubtedly was, but he had not thought that any of the responsibility therefor lay on him. He had not liked Amy's silence over it in view of her seemingly elaborate preparations—it seemed too significant for so simple a thing, though he had never said so. He had sat at the head of his table, and had joined gravely in the conversation as it lagged about the board. One or two of the small crowd he liked—Francesca Dwight, for instance, and Germaine. The other three women he did not care for at all. Against Isabel Blair he held the old knowledge of her having been Amy's boon companion and abettor in all her yellow-journal escapades, the very memory of which made him set his

teeth hard. That Miss Blair had made of it all merely successive step-pings to a fine place in her profession he did not consider. As for Beth Morris and Elinor Darling, he disliked them both, and the men were even less to his taste. Evan Kilvert would never be a "mixer." His spirit was free enough, but his outer man was conventional to a degree, as were his tastes. He had old-fashioned ideas about women and their ways. He detested the sight of a woman smoking. He had disliked it when Amy had cigarettes passed with the coffee that night, and he had disliked it more when the women, to the last of them, refused what he knew they would have accepted had not he, Amy's husband, been sitting there, smoking his own cigarette in simulated peace.

So, during this fortnight, Kilvert endured his home atmosphere with what philosophy he might muster against a foreseen and expected contingency. But his acceptance of it as a necessary evil was marred by a vague sense of some fault of his which he could hardly place. Outwardly he had been hospitable enough to Amy's friends. He wondered if he might have improved the spirit of it. And first and last and all the time he pitied the woman he had made his wife, as she was beating her beautiful, strong wings against the cage he had given her; and sympathized with her; and left her free to work out her own salvation in her own devious way. But all this while, deep in his heart, so deeply buried that it lay all un-owned and unsuspected, nestled a tiny kernel of something far removed from pity and sympathy, and that absolute respect she craved from him.

## V

FOR one long morning Amy moved about her house like a devastating wind. She had not seen Kilvert for two days. She had not breakfasted with him the day before, and he had

telephoned through his stenographer that he could not be home to dinner. She had not been asleep, but she had pretended sleep, when she heard him come that night—to no purpose, however, for he left her utterly to herself. When she came down to breakfast this morning, long after he left for downtown, she found a note beside her plate:

James told me last night your masseuse had just left, and I did not try to see you nor to waken you this morning. If this state of nerves and health is to continue had you not better see Dr. Jerrems, and get his opinion as to the best place for you to spend the next month or two? When I can be of service, command me always.

Since then she had trailed her skirts recklessly from drawing-room to kitchen and butler's pantry. She gave the servants orders and countermands until they almost smiled before her face, and would certainly laugh behind her back.

As noon approached, she dressed hurriedly, and drove downtown with no aim whatever. From her carriage window, during a crush and blockade of traffic, she caught sight of an odd necklace of copper and topaz in a goldsmith's shop, and she went into the shop immediately to begin negotiations for it. After the proper references, the man promised to send the bauble that afternoon. She lunched downtown, alone, but luxuriously. She might have telephoned Kilvert to come up from the office district. She knew he would come gladly—and the thought of his gladness was enough to make her withhold the message. Things had gone all ways of late. Not that all things had not moved with apparent smoothness. They had. Kilvert had let the days and nights move as on ball-bearings. She had simply been allowed to go to herself, and she was quite keen enough to see that Kilvert was deliberately giving her her head. She would have resented savage mastery much. Almost did she resent this coolly bestowed freedom more. For, after all, she was not free. It was this knowledge which galled and chafed her.



She came back at two o'clock, to meet James's reproachful face—she had told him she would lunch at home. She paused in the hall, hearing the ripple of her piano, and recognizing Germaine Taft's touch.

"Don't stop!" she cried impetuously, as she came quickly into the music-room. "I'll get out of these street things, and then we'll have an old-time rumpus. No, I've lunched."

She rapped out the last sentence at the impassive James, and with a last admonition to her friend to go on with her playing, went swiftly upstairs. She was hardly out of her outdoor things, however, before Gerry's old tap sounded.

"You beast!" Amy cried, her brown eyes sparkling with pleasure. "I told you to play! It's not the same, is it, in a big room conventionally set apart for it, to banging a piano in a scrooged-up nest of a hole that's used for everything, and a rented piano at that. Sit down, and whenever I find anything to put on, I'll send for tea, and then on with the dance!"

Mrs. Taft cast aside her furs and sank into a deep chair. She looked at her friend, standing before her dressing-table, pulling the pins from her shining hair, twisting it into a thing of comfort and beauty combined, moving restlessly all the time, and as she looked she read the signs of Amy's zodiac.

"Everything's everywhere," said Amy briefly. "I haven't let a soul in here for a week, and I don't know where a thing is. I throw them here and there and cover them up, and there you are!"

She was looking about her for the garment she wanted. Her restless eyes fell on the fire, and she came quickly across the room to replenish it. As she came, her high heel caught in her petticoat ruffle of pale green silk and much ribbon and lace, and a nerve-wrenching sound of parting silk was the aftermath. She bent with an impatient word, and examined the relentless result of haste and heel.

"It's quite hopeless!" she announced.

"Ah, these emotional clothes! The next trousseau I buy shall be black and white and gray—then I'll be eligible at once for bridehood, widowhood or divorcéehood."

She pinned up the torn place, as she went into her dressing-room, and she came back presently, slipping into an iris-embroidered kimono.

"Let's have tea sent up," she said, "kettle and all. It won't be much like old times—this part of it"—she waved her hand about her room—"but we used to make the tea. Do you remember the trash we used to have sitting round that was so precious—that old Beethoven head—we couldn't have had hats if it hadn't been for his old plaster crown to trim them on and get the 'set' right. Gerry, how far they're gone, those days!"

"And how much more beautiful it is to run into your private shop, and be trimmed instead of trimming!" said Mrs. Taft lightly. "It does very well when we're young and merry."

Amy sent for tea and sandwiches. Mrs. Taft watched her, her beautiful eyes darkening to blackness and her lips pressed hard together.

"How is Lennie Rhodes's new book coming out?" Amy asked as she came back. "He read me bits of it last winter—it seemed a howling good thing. But I haven't heard. I feel all out of the running. I haven't kept up."

"It is really going well," said Germaine. "It's a mild sort of a hit. I'm glad for Lennie. He really has solid ambitions, if he could only get far enough ahead to work the solid things up. But the froth sells. Where's 'Miriam Merriman,' Amy?"

Amy laughed oddly. "Mrs. Evan Kilvert's taken her place, Gerry dear," she said mockingly. "Ach, the explosion when Evan discovered the hideous and hidden truth!"

"You didn't tell him?" queried Mrs. Taft.

"Not I!" shrugged Amy. "He picked up *The Tatler* one night and discovered it for himself. He has always said I write of too intimately personal things—well, I had done it then. It



was a sort of devilish thing—I felt devilish when I wrote it. Remember it?—‘The Good Man’! It was based on a bit of argument we had one night which I saw would make good ‘copy,’ and in a sad moment I used it. I would have vowed that Evan never knew *The Tattler* existed—you know what they like, and I can do it for them to the queen’s taste. But, Evan! I told him no one knew who Miriam Merriman was, and then had to own up all the old crowd did, and any others they might care to tell. He said it showed a diseased mind to be able to put such sheer devilry into any story—he said lots of things. Some of them amused me, and a great lot of others I didn’t like. It ended by his making me vow never to send anything else to *The Tattler*. So, just to show him what it means when he stops my slender sources of income, I went downtown and ran up a bill—this is one of ‘em, Gerry.”

She dragged over a box, and opened it to display a beautiful black gown, loose falling transparency over its princess slip, after a style she so much affected. “The stays alone cost thirty-five dollars,” she said modestly. “I was going to take a twenty-five-dollar style, and then madame insisted on putting on these, for the sake of a line, and I was all in, Gerry.” She laughed and patted the daringly brocaded bits of silk lovingly. “They are simply exquisite!” she added solemnly.

Mrs. Taft shook her sane young head. She knew of old what Amy’s extravagances could be, even with a tiny matter of money to go on. She hardly dared think what she might do with an unlimited charge account.

“After all, Amy,” she said slowly, “that ‘Merriman’ stuff is rotten. It’s more than that—it’s salacious, lots of it. Of course it sells, because it takes a clever sort of trickery to write it, and it’s paid you well. But it’s on a low plane; clever, but low. While you were making your own way, it was the thing to make it—that’s what we say, at least. But I don’t blame Evan Kil-

vert for making you give it up—you provoke me, Amy. You are no child, not to know how men feel about such things. In a sense—a very limited sense—it doesn’t harm you; you are clean-minded enough, and you don’t take it seriously. But only one woman in a million could do that sort of thing and stay clean, and you’ll have to sift out a world of men to find one you could convince of that lone woman’s clean frankness of mind. But ‘The Good Man’ wasn’t clean—it was one-sided and sneering and regularly immoral! And it was based on a talk between you and Evan—Amy, how could you!”

“How couldn’t I?” said Amy. Her eyes were purely devilish. “Evan was too absurd that hateful time—I never thought him goody-goody before—it struck me funnily. I felt like writing it up, and I did. *The Tattler* took it—they always take all my stuff, and it was printed right away—rushed right in—then they sent me a copy, and Evan got hold of it—and then the deluge!”

As Amy rattled on, Mrs. Taft sat suddenly upright, and cast one horrified glance at her friend.

“Amy,” she said, “when was it that story came out?”

“About three weeks ago,” said Amy carelessly. “Just before I went mad and had you all up to dinner——”

“When did you send it in?” Germaine asked swiftly.

“The week before,” replied Amy. “I told you they rushed it. Wasn’t it a glorious dinner, Gerry? Didn’t everybody shine—like brass or pewter—glared or didn’t? It makes me sick to think of it—sick!”

Mrs. Taft sank back in her chair and closed her eyes. She herself looked sick and worn. Amy’s later outburst she had hardly heard.

Amy herself had dropped her firm chin into the cup of her fragile hand, and stared gloomily into the fire.

“What was the consensus of opinion?” she asked abruptly. “Of course you talked it and me over later, probably at Maman Taffi’s—I thought so

—it was there we always found ourselves when there was something to say that required gentle limbering of tongues before it would come. Well?”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Taft at length, in a curiously lifeless tone, “we talked it all pretty well over.”

Amy looked up as the silence grew. Her wonderfully expressive eyes narrowed and dilated.

“Just tell me what Elinor said,” she suggested wickedly.

The tea things had been brought, and she had been busying herself with them. She gave Gerry her cup just now, and Mrs. Taft smiled slightly as she took it.

“You are incorrigible, Amy,” she commented. “But all the same I am going to tell you.”

She lay back in her chair, sipping her tea. She did not speak until she had drained the cup. As Amy refilled it Mrs. Taft began to speak slowly.

“Of course it was a failure, Amy,” she said. “You told me that night that Evan knew nothing about it, who, more than any of us, should have been prepared. You see, he holds a deep though unowned grudge against all of us for our share in making you what you are. Yes, my dear, he loves you—much, but he would gladly see you different. What man would not? He hates, you see, the outer evidences of the inner bohemianism he doesn’t understand—and he bore a good deal of that sort of thing years ago—for you. One or two of us he likes for inscrutable reasons; but he doesn’t care much for the rest of us, and he hasn’t any longings after comprehension. He stood much of it nine years back, and he likes it less now than then.”

“To be sure,” said Amy crisply, “I might have telephoned him along with the rest of you, but—I didn’t. I——”

“You are going at all of this the wrong way,” said Gerry softly. “You must be honest with him, honest as he is with you. You lie a little, Amy, you know you do; not wickedly, but for expediency. Amy, I lived four

years with a liar. If he had told the truth about things I should have been enduring yet, for I cared as they cared when the world was young. But his lies were slow poison, and in the end they murdered the best love his life will ever know. Amy, you must be honest——”

Amy wrenched her shoulder free. “I hate discussions,” she said drily. “All my life I’ve done as I pleased. In the last six months I’ve asked more permissions to do inconsequential things than I ever allowed myself to ask in all my childhood.”

“Well, we said all these things,” said Mrs. Taft gently, “and some harder ones. And it was the general opinion of us all, Amy, since you insist on hearing it, that you yourself hold in your own hand the ending to it all, bitter or sweet. We all like Evan, even those of us whom he does not like, and others of whom he isn’t sure. Elinor, of course, thinks precisely as she did the night you told us of your engagement; which brings me to the last thing I have to say.”

She bent forward, and let her hand fall on her friend’s shining hair and linger there.

“I can see that you have just pierced the glamour and the newnesses, and that life just now seems empty indeed. What is certainly coming in the next few weeks will be anything but easy to endure, for you, or for that man you suffered to marry you. And I am sick at heart that I haven’t a conscience sufficiently elastic to gloss things over, and let a foolish vow go hang until a better season——”

“Ah-h!” Amy Kilvert breathed sharply. She threw off her friend’s tender hand and sprang to her feet. She went over to a window, where she stood for many minutes. At last she came back, and dropped on the rug beside Germaine, and leaned against her knee.

“You’re a good old girl, Gerry,” she said huskily. “There’s not another of the girls would have stuck it out, with me in this dare-devil mood—to keep her word in spite of it. Francesca

would have weakened, and no one would ever ask Beth to vow anything, and Isabel would have used her very excellent judgment, and Elinor is a Jesuit, anyway. You are just the straightest old girl, dear. You promised, and you told me. And now to bear it!"

She stopped to moisten her dry lips. Her head went down on her hands.

"When did he come back?" she asked faintly.

"A month ago, or more."

"And you heard of it——?"

"This morning."

"Good old Gerry!" Amy whispered.

Germaine Taft let the silence fall unheeded, while she frowned into the fire. She had married at twenty, foolishly, but with an abandon to love's call that evoked admiration and hushed pity, for a time, at least. She had endured for four years, as she had said, until she knew her love was dead, murdered as surely as Robert Taft might never murder any living thing. Since then she had worked as few women do, bound up at last in her voice and the future that lay bright before her.

So she could understand the quivering heart of this woman, crouching here, as most of the other girls could not; as Elinor Darling, despite her cleverness, could not—poor Elinor, to whom the heights as well as depths of love were all unexplored. And Germaine knew, beyond room for doubting, that the depths were worth enduring, if one had but reached the heights and gazed for a brief space from them. She knew Bertie Vawtry for all that he was, and she marveled that Amy had not known it long before, but the memory of her own wasted love kept her patient where the others were coldly unsympathetic; even though she knew all the story was born of passion rather than love, that each had played on the weakest points of the other, that the heights by either one had not been reached. For neither was other than selfish utterly. Neither had ever sunk self,

that happily it might be found again, ennobled.

Her pity went out to Kilvert. Her heart ached suddenly for him. She fancied, what was true enough, that he knew but little of women, and less of their vagaries, and she wondered what amount of patience he had to draw on, and what amount of mastery he would not be afraid to use. He had told Amy from the first that she was to be no slave, but free, and Germaine felt, wisely enough, that, while the sound of freedom tickled Amy's emancipated ear, masculine mastery was the one thing which could touch the real woman lying beneath all the emancipating processes of her years of liberty. And Kilvert knew but little of women, and had married this most complex one, fancying his eyes were open to her needs.

She bent at last and touched Amy's shoulder, bare where the kimono had slipped away.

"You'll not see him—ever, Amy?" she said gently.

"Heaven forbid!" said Amy Kilvert hoarsely. She sprang to her feet again, and stood, slight and shivering, staring down with purple-shadowed eyes on Germaine.

"It's pure obsession!" she said at last through pallid lips. "I'm a beast, I know. And I know he's a miserable little cad. But ah, Gerry, he's sweet and weak and lovable, and that's the combination we women can't resist, when such a man gets our hearts. He may wring them dry if he wants, and we'll bear the pain and smile in his face. It was that other woman, anyway—the woman I have still to reckon with." Her eyes grew black.

"Amy!" implored Germaine. "You haven't anyone to reckon with now—but Evan!"

Amy Kilvert turned away toward her haven, the blind window. When she came back once more, her twisting face was composed, her voice steadied from its breakings.

"You're a brick, Gerry," she said quietly. "I'll never forget this to

you, as long as I live. I could meet him anywhere now, and not an eyelash would quiver. It was the chance of running on him, not knowing he was in town, that must have made me go down under. I'll never forget it, Gerry, never, never!"

"On the strength of that," said Mrs. Taft, "I shall ask you an impudent question. Have you told Evan of that episode?"

"That is impudent," said Amy. Her lips smiled a little, but fear crept into her eyes. "Evan took me as I am," she said drily. "He really has some unique ideas about things. He really holds that one's past is one's own, whether that one be man or woman. He has never questioned me about a single—episode, you call them, Gerry."

"That isn't the point," said Germaine quietly. "It's a question of whether you've told him voluntarily or not. You see, Amy, it's very well for us advanced creatures to claim equalities. But when it comes to down-right actual living—it's all rot, all of it. There are certain fundamental laws of sex that I doubt can be eliminated in any so-called sexless heaven. Amy, Amy, we are miserable sinners, all of us!"

"Don't go!" begged Amy. "Must you, really? Well, go in peace. I shall make myself irresistible tonight, for the first time in two weeks—three, I might say, and go down to play the model wife. But, oh, Gerry"—she smiled with her lips, while her eyes held rebellion only—"this fearful mental bond that the very fact of marriage brings! This never being able to get away from the memory that I, of my own will, deliberately gave myself to any man, deliberately vowed those dreadful vows! Why wasn't I born twenty centuries hence, when this barbarous system of marriage is wiped out, and something—anything—is in its place!"

She leaned over the stair railing and called down another series of good-byes. The sound of them, or something else, brought Mrs. Taft back to

her, even from the foot of the stairs. She took Amy's hands eagerly, almost desperately.

"Promise me," she said quickly, "promise me, Amy, that under no circumstance will you send any more work of any sort to *The Tattler*. Promise me, dear, forever!"

Amy stared, amazed. "Very well," she said coolly. "I fancy Evvie will have his eye out for that, too, regardless of my vow to him. I couldn't go through another scene!"

"Never, Amy," said Mrs. Taft doubtfully. She kissed Amy's cold lips again, and went away.

Amy stared after her wonderingly. That was not like Gerry—nothing of that last bit of talk. What sort of domestic crisis did she think sending work to *The Tattler* might precipitate! She found she could not answer the question, and in a moment it was gone from her mind. She stood, bent over the railing, staring vacantly down into the hall. The sound of the opening outer door aroused her, and with a frightened glance downward she went swiftly away to her room. She had shrunk from going back to it. Now it seemed like some sweet house of refuge.

"Ah-h!" she breathed again as she shut the door behind her, and leaned heavily against the wall. In a moment she gathered herself together and went over to her dressing-table, and sat down before it, and pulled out a tiny secret drawer. Evan objected to rouge, but he had been known inconsistently to admire some of its subtler results. Rouge it must be tonight—she was shocked at her yellowish pallor. With all her imaginings she had not thought she would be moved like this. A physical sickness that was akin to nausea almost overcame her. She let her head fall forward on her arms. The sound of Kilvert's steps brought her upright. She stared at her door like some live thing caught in a trap. The steps paused a second, and then went on.

Amy suddenly remembered that note of his, that morning. She knew now why she would not telephone him



to come up to luncheon that noon. It would have been too great and too instant concession. But it was quite evident that he was thinking it was high time for a change of tactics. If she began to play tonight, he would lay it all to that clever note of his—well, let him; let him think what he would, what he could!

She smiled coldly. Then she picked up some cold cream and began to rub a little of it into her skin.

"I've got to begin to act now," she said to herself grimly. "I might as well begin tonight. There may be some amusement in it, even with him!"

## VI

SHE swept into the dining-room a few moments late, deliberately so. She came with a jangling of jet and a perfumed swishing of skirts, with her beautiful hair exquisitely dressed, and a delicate flush on her charming face. Her eyes, skilfully treated, shone like oddly colored jewels. She wore the frock in which she had indulged herself when Kilvert called a halt on her literary output—it had given her a malicious satisfaction to wear it on this night.

Kilvert looked up in surprise as she entered. He was already seated at the table. She had protested fretfully one night recently at his waiting for her, and since then he had gone in when the dinner-hour came. He rose immediately, leaving his soup untasted, and came to draw back her chair for her himself.

"I didn't know you were dressing, Amy," he said quietly; "otherwise I should have waited."

He went back to his place, and laid aside the evening paper with which he had been solacing his solitude. While he waited for her to be served he glanced at her quizzically.

"What is it tonight?" he asked. His eyes spoke his approval, and no woman resents that, even from her husband.

Amy met his eyes. "I've been mop-

ing like a sick tigress," she said frankly. "This dress came home—I didn't tell you I was getting it—and inspired me to action. At any rate, I got into it. You don't object to my getting it? I didn't need it at all."

"I only object that you didn't get it sooner," remarked Kilvert, "if this is the effect."

"And another bill hasn't come in yet—I only got this today." She put one hand to her lovely, slim throat. "This darling necklace. I didn't need this, either, Evvie. I suppose I ought to be whipped?"

Kilvert smiled in spite of himself at her upward inflection. After six months of marriage it had come to pass that, for the first time since wealth had really come to him, he opened the monthly bills with a feeling that was curiosity at least; a curiosity that, with every month, found ample and more ample reward.

"One necklace more or less—so long as it isn't always a solid bank of diamonds—oughtn't to matter," he said. "You'd better try these mushrooms tonight, Amy. Here, they're delicious."

The dinner-hour turned out to be a delightful one. Kilvert met her halfway at every turn, and Amy herself felt equal to anything. The spirit of the game had taken possession of her. She looked at Kilvert at last as he sat across from her, eating his grapes as delicately as a woman, tall and broad-shouldered, with his fine head more than frosted, with his firm lips and firmer chin and still firmer jaw, with his gray eyes that matched his hair enticingly, and lashes which, despite his premature grayness, were still dark. Ah, he was a splendid thing to see, and he was good, good, good beyond compare—at all events he had rescued her from that frightful fourth-story room, and had given her this, all this.

Kilvert pushed his chair back suddenly and came over to her. "Bring the coffee to the library," he said to James. He laid his strong, steady fingers on her shaking hands, and when the man left the room he bent down to her.



"Brace up," he said quietly. "That's a good girl. Come, we'll shut the servants away, and then you can pull yourself together, dear, or let go. I know you've been in hell."

Amy, following him to the library, honestly tried to pull herself together. It might have been better if she had broken down and gone through the tempest. But she knew that Kilvert loathed tears almost more than any man she had ever known, and she refrained therefore, hardly out of consideration for him so much as for the sake of preserving intact his cordial feeling for her. Just now she required approval, quite as much as her lungs needed oxygen.

The coffee-tray was brought in almost immediately, and she sat down beside the low table on which it and the liqueurs were placed. She poured the coffee into its gilded cup, and, reaching for the decanter of cognac, measured off a liqueur-glass and poured it into the coffee. Kilvert stood waiting, deliberating. He was wishing, for the first time, that Amy had not been, for him, the one woman; not because he did not desire her now more than ever, but because, if he had known others, many others, in the years in which he might have cultivated them, he would know what to do now, instead of feeling inward doubt as to whether to accept conditions placidly, or to crush her to him in a passion of mastery and ardor. He was still deliberating as he took the cup she handed him. When he had finished it, Amy was drinking her coffee, and he knew this much, that no mere brute of man can afford, even in a lover's heaven, to run the risk of ruining a new gown. And, by the time Amy's coffee, with its double allowance of cognac, was sipped, she was almost herself again; so much herself that, as Kilvert took out his cigarettes, she leaned forward.

"Just one or two tonight, Evvie," she said coaxingly. "I need them. They'll steady me when nothing else will. That's a good boy. You're so foolish to care."

Kilvert held out the box to her and gave her a light. "I don't precisely care," he protested, "in just the sense you mean. I confess I don't see the need of a woman's acquiring the habit, but as long as you smoke all day, you might as well smoke with me."

Amy laughed and shrugged her shoulders. "Your knowledge is omniscient," she said.

Kilvert lifted her right hand and pointed to a small brown stain on the middle finger. "The source of your nerves," he remarked. "That's what I really mind. It hurts you."

Again a proof of that terrible intimacy of knowledge! She resented it in every fiber, and it was resentment which prompted her next speech.

"Physically?" she asked, through the blue rings of her cigarette-smoke. "As my high society tales hurt me morally?"

Kilvert was standing against the fireplace, one arm upon the mantel. He looked at her steadily, and she felt herself shrink beneath his gaze, as she had shrunk many times since he had grown to look on her with new understanding. She grew even more defiant.

"Oh, Good Man!" she sneered. "Be my physician, of the body and the mind!"

Kilvert's face went darkly crimson. Amy caught her lip hard as she saw the flush come, born, not of mortification at her sneer, but of anger, just and mighty. She felt the bad taste of the scene, her unpardonable rudeness, her complete defenselessness against his scorn—it might well be his disgust. She rose quickly. Words rushed from her lips.

"I was talking with Gerry today," she said, "about that 'Miriam Merri-man' stuff. She said one thing—let me say it to you, Evan—'Only one woman in a million could do that sort of work and stay clean, and you'd have to sift a world of men to find the one you could convince of that lone woman's clean frankness of mind!'"

He caught her plea instantly, and stopped her with a gesture. Things

he had said in that stormy talk of theirs had wounded him in retrospect far more than they had wounded her.

"It's the people who read it, and the people who know you write it," he said briefly. "You—God in heaven, Amy!—have I known you so long to know you so little? Dear, it is so cheap—lower than the back-door gossip they print. When you could do wonderful things, with work and concentration! You've skimmed so long, done the surface things because they brought the quick returns. Thank God, you've no cause ever to think of that part of it again. That idea you were telling me about weeks ago—you haven't done anything with it yet?"

Again, even in her gratitude at his understanding of her pleading, she felt annoyance at his knowledge of that thing, her brilliant idea, with a solution clever beyond compare. She had had it in mind for some years, though it was no more than outlined yet. She had always longed to write a book, and was always sure she never would, merely because it would take so long. Her stories and skits and bits of criticism she was able to dash off at a sitting, and her very versatility and speed in writing had seemed, through long indulgence in surface things, to unfit her for sustained work of any sort.

She turned away from Kilvert and lighted another cigarette.

"No," she said brusquely, "I haven't touched it."

"Then get at it tomorrow," urged Kilvert. "Get down to work and make it come. Do it first of all for your own sake, and then for me, because I believe in it, and in you."

"There's a knotty point," objected Amy. "I've never quite worked it out. The sudden change in the character of the woman—it has to be or the story falls. But I don't believe in sudden changes in real life, Evan. People stay what they are born."

Kilvert looked at her as she stood before him, one lovely hand on a lovelier hip, the other carelessly holding her cigarette. Did people change?

He had hoped for her, not change, perhaps, but certainly development. He shut his cigarette-case and slipped it into his pocket.

"It's a simple psychological question," he said. "You can work it out." He glanced at the clock. "It's a little late," he suggested, "but I can telephone. Should you like a play?"

Amy hesitated doubtfully. "I don't know," she said. "What is here?"

Kilvert named over a few musical comedies, with the natural first choice of a man whose day hours bring heavy problems and whose nights cry out for relaxation.

"There are 'Sherlock Holmes' and Mrs. Campbell's 'Magda,'" he added.

"I've seen 'Holmes' four times," said Amy, "and the thrill is about gone. See what you can get for 'Magda,' Evan."

Kilvert called to her in a few moments. "The seats are good. The curtain goes up in seven minutes, but we may get down before Magda's entrance."

He stifled a sigh as he turned from the telephone. He had hoped it might be something foolish and rollicking, not for his sake but for hers. He rather shied at problem plays these days. He had problems of his own which no tradition-ridden stagecraft might adequately express, and he was fearful of putting any more into Amy's overcrowded brain. As he recalled "Magda," however, it held no problem which could cause a household upheaval.

They sat through the play almost silently. Amy's lips went white when von Keller came on the scene—she had forgotten that old lover, and the part he played in Magda's life. When the play was over and they were waiting for their carriage, she turned upon Kilvert.

"People don't change," she said fiercely. "Magda was always the same, always!"

"But she had grown past von Keller, at least," said Kilvert quietly. He looked down at her suddenly. He felt the frightfully unstrung shaking

of her arm along his own. He hurried her into their carriage, at last fortunately ready. He was afraid of her nerves these vital days. Once within it he put a steady arm about her and drew her close.

"Dear," he said, "can't we try to talk it out? I am sometimes at a loss before your words, but ten thousand times more so in the face of your silences."

Amy caught her breath in a quick, hard sob, but she did not speak. Kilvert waited a moment, and then went quietly on:

"You must not think that I have not seen much and felt much in these last few weeks. I've known this very thing would come, and the pity is that I can't help you. You must fight it out yourself in brave battle. Dear, if only we had been married years ago, and gone through with this readjusting period when we both were younger and more adaptable!"

Amy caught swiftly at the shred of self-justification. "We couldn't have been," she said. "We couldn't have been now if you hadn't had this." Her hand went vaguely out about the carriage with a gesture quite sufficiently expressive. "Oh, I am a mercenary wretch and a fool!" she cried hysterically. "But I always said, and always held to it, that marriage without money was unendurable—you know it would have been—you know what it is, even with money to smooth it over. Evvie, Evvie, I'm a selfish thing, but I was honest with you—"

Her voice broke over the word. Honest! When her marriage was founded on a lie, a tacit lie! When she had allowed him to infer that there had never been another man whom she could have married! She felt a mad impulse rush upon her, to confession. She opened her lips. It was full upon her, that intoxicating allurements which self-abasement has at times for every human soul.

"Yes," came Kilvert's quiet voice. "We've been honest with each other, Amy, almost brutally so. I knew it

was the money partly, dear, that gave you to me. That was right enough. But something else gave you to me, too. Without it you could not have come. That other thing made the first thing right enough. I've never asked more of you, dear, than you could give and I couldn't have asked for you again if I had not the blessed wealth to give you. I told you I would have infinite patience. We entered into it with open eyes."

Amy sank back within his arms, white and frightened. Thank God, she had not spoken! Never in her life had she seen Kilvert openly angry, and she had a curious fear of it that amounted to terror. He must believe the lie—that she cared for him partially at least. Her nerveless relief at her narrow escape made her relax through all her body, and she lay at last, almost a dead weight in Kilvert's arms. Suddenly she began to sob, great, tearing sobs, that shook her from head to foot.

"Dear, dear girl!" Kilvert whispered softly. "What torment you have been in! There, there! We'll get home quickly, to light and warmth, and scatter all these horrors. I've left you to yourself to fight it out alone. It's too hard for you—we must face things together now, Amy, together!"

She lay in his arms, sobbing and shivering, all through the drive. When they reached home, he lifted her in his arms, slender thing that she was, and all but carried her up the steps. Once within the hall, she leaned shuddering against the newel post, while Kilvert bolted the outer doors. She weakly tried to make the ascent, but Kilvert spoke quickly, with authority.

"Wait, Amy," he said briefly.

He shot the last bolt into place. Then he came over to her and put his arm about her shaking body, and, for the first time in weeks, they went upstairs together.

## VII

For an entire week the play went on, stumblingly at times, feverishly al-

ways; but on the whole, as Amy reviewed the days, she felt some interest and a certain chastened pride in her success. She was onlooker and leading lady at one and the same time. This acting helped to pass the days. There came to be a certain pleasure in getting the farcical masque adjusted, not a hair's slender breadth awry.

But every day her mistake grew more shockingly apparent to her, and she feared the outcome with a great terror. For she knew that Kilvert did not hold his name lightly, nor her share in it.

One day she found herself in the library, beside a case of law books. She took one out, and discovered that she was turning, with reckless instinct, to its section on Divorce. She dropped it, indeed, when the word smote her eyes, but she went back to it, and pored over it for two hours. She sighed wearily as she shut it at last and slipped it carefully back. Oh, to be free again, free—it was the only boon she asked, simple liberty—and during this afternoon, the noose had only tightened about her throat. There were no grounds, none!

As she left the library she glanced back in nervous fear lest she might have left that book, after all, lying openly about, and the beauty of the room caught her weary eyes and held them as never before. Rich and dark and restful, all that a library should be, all that she had longed for—and now that she had it, she was using it for this! Her lip curled in self-disgust. What was the matter with her? Why could she not make herself care horribly for the man she had married, as horribly much as he cared for her—and how much that was, it seemed she had never known until this past fearful week! She had honestly determined to make herself care, and now all she cried out for was freedom, the old fourth-story room, if need be, with the old dresses, and the old, eternal wonder over the next week's income; all things uncertain, but all things free, as she spelled Liberty.

She went through the rich, dark hall—it, too, precisely her idea of what

a hall should be—and on upstairs, to a small room which held her old desk and her old typewriter. She sat down before it as a matter of habit. Battered and old as the machine was, she had refused to change it. She was used to its peculiar personality, and she did not like the thought of making friends with a new one. She had a sort of fancy that she would never write again, if this old friend were allowed to go from her, and every now and then she had ambitions, great ones, to write that really good thing, to do something really worth while. Sometimes she had risen from her bed, and crept across the hall, filled with some idea that, in the darkness, seemed good. But her ideas never bore the glare of light; in it they shriveled up and faded. Only last night she had done that very thing, creeping softly, so as not to waken Kilvert, and the flight had ended in a fit of hysteria from which he patiently rescued her, and for which she was paying all this day with aching eyes and head.

She remembered this afternoon Kilvert's urging of a week ago to get down to solid work and make the big thing come. She wanted to do that. Beyond all things, even her longings for freedom, did she desire to prove herself to Evan Kilvert in work of which he unreservedly approved. But she doubted more and more that she could ever concentrate. She had worked well in the years past, but always under driving compulsion. She never got her newspaper stories in a moment before they had to be in, and time and again, for some big story, the presses had been held back for her. When there was need, she had always, somehow, risen to the occasion; but now there was no need, except indeed to prove herself to Kilvert, who professed such infinite faith in her and her possibilities.

She found it at last, at the bottom of a trunk in the trunk-room. Then she dressed rapidly, twisting her hair into her old way of wearing it, slipping into a plain shirt waist with a loose, dashing tie, instead of the stiff effects



she had worn of late. She hurried breathlessly, though the night had scarcely fallen, and the hour was very early. It seemed to her that she could not wait, could not breathe the soft, rich air of this Avenue home any longer. The city called to her, the great, living, throbbing city, of which she had been a part so long. A thousand beckoning hands plead mutely with her, extended from all directions, north, east, and west, and south. In any direction she might go and find familiar haven. Maman Taffi's, for instance—some of the old crowd would surely be there. But no, she would not dine tonight with any of the old crowd in the flesh. Her revel was to be with Memory, her last revel, she said with quivering lips, before she settled down to final goodness and dulness.

She pinned on a small, dark hat, and reached from habit for her rich furs. She hesitated; then she went down to the bottom of that trunk again, and brought out a modest bit of mink which she fastened about her throat. She tied a heavy veil about her face, and went downstairs. In the shadow of the half-opened door she spoke to the butler.

"I am going out to dinner, James," she said briefly.

"Mr. Kilvert has the horses, ma'am," said James. One might fancy his tone was reproving. "Shall I call a cab, ma'am?"

"No," said Amy, briefly still. "It is only a few blocks. I want the walk."

She went quickly down the steps, and down the Avenue. When she reached the first cross street below, she took it, and walked rapidly along it. She felt that strange fear of the dark to which she had become more and more a prey since her marriage—she, who for years had been accustomed to the city at all hours of the day or night, attended or alone. She quickened her steps from fear and eagerness. Just beyond her was the street-car line which would take her to her Mecca, the tiny French café that, after two empty years, called her insistently to its doors once more.

She sat in a car which was all but empty, watching the frantic crush uptown. How often she had struggled in that maelstrom! She caught herself viewing it almost as a novelty, and that after ten years of its fierce buffetings, so quickly had wealth and its comforts become accustomed things.

She alighted at last, near a small square, and walked across its windy spaces. Just beyond it lay her goal, the small, unostentatious café, its entrance unlettered, with no sign to indicate its presence, yet known to the favored few. She found her heart beating, and her pulses throbbing. The buffeting wind played about her, and she did not feel it. Instead she felt a wonderful exhilaration pouring through her.

The room was well filled when she entered it. She glanced about it—how strange was Fate sometimes! She walked straight across to a small corner table at the rear of the room, set for two. She took that seat which enabled her to command a view of the entire dining-hall if she wished, or, if she pleased, to turn aside and sit unseen. When a waiter approached her through a haze of cigar-smoke, she feed him quickly, and pointed to the chair across from her. He immediately turned it down.

"You needn't serve me just now," she said. "I'll wait."

The man nodded, the reserved chair explaining her words to him, and he went away, her silver jingling comfortably in his pocket.

She sat there a long time, her head resting on her hand, and so shielded from any staring diners. No one paid any attention to her, however, unless one might except two or three men, dining alone in different parts of the room, whose eyes were drawn to her as bits of steel to the magnet. But her attitude was forbidding, and she was unmistakably blind to any admiring or ogling glances.

For even before the waiter left her to peace and solitude, she had begun her mad revel with Memory, her guest who was to sit across from her in that

turned-down chair. If Kilvert had been right a week back when he told her that she had been walking in hell, she knew tonight that she had skirted only the edges of that baneful place. For, since that day, when Gerry had come to keep her vow of telling, she had penetrated its most secret depths.

Months before she had pledged Gerry to that act of friendship, to tell her when Bertie Vawtry should come back at last to town. After his marriage he had gone abroad—he was afraid—afraid—Amy told herself, to run a risk of meeting her, with the story that was theirs.

She turned her back sharply upon the room, seeking that merciful solitude of blank wall with which she had provided herself. That story of hers and Bertie's, which, in all its bitterness, only Germaine knew!

She rose and walked restlessly about the small room. He skirt caught on a drawer half opened, and its contents attracted her eye—a mass of papers and clippings and the like, which she had always intended to go through, and never had. She drew up a low chair, and began the task forthwith. It might occupy her until time to dress for dinner.

In less than an hour she had accomplished the greater part of it, merely by casting most of the material into a waste-basket. In lifting a last pile of papers, her hand slipped along a smooth surface, and she caught her breath sharply, as she recognized it for her Red Letter Day book, stretching faithfully enough over a decade, kept up conscientiously enough for months at a time, and let lapse for months, but on the whole a faithful history of those years. She thought grimly of her marriage certificate for the last entry. "The End"!

She turned the pages hurriedly. Once or twice she stopped to smile at some memory evoked from the dimmed years. She lingered over half-forgotten stories of hers, pasted in, living proofs of her yellow-journal

days. There were programs, too, of plays, dances, concerts. She came upon a full-page entry, made by Lennie Rhodes. She read it musingly, with smiling lips, and turned the page, still smiling at Lennie's drolleries. Two blank pages struck her eye, the right-hand one pinned securely to the page succeeding, its reverse side lying hidden so from curious eyes.

She shut the book with a little moan. Bertie Vawtry had written that hidden entry, the page full, the most wonderful love-lyric he would ever write, dashed off one night on such a night, for her alone! There was no other copy of it. It lay there now, all of two years old, and all her—

The day closed about her, the twilight fell as she sat there, the book held in her lap, open at those two pages, pinned jealously together. She started at last, and her teeth chattered, as a step sounded close beside her, and a hand pressed her shoulder masterfully.

"I knocked, Amy, and you didn't hear," said Kilvert's strong, easy voice.

"No," muttered Amy, her voice shaking. "I—was asleep, I think. The room is cold."

Kilvert turned on the lights. Then he came back and bent over her chair. "What is it?" he asked.

She shut the book quickly, and glanced up at him. He was already in evening dress, although the clock told only five.

"Nothing," she said. "Just a book of foolish things a girl keeps and is ashamed of. What brings you home so early, Evan?"

"An unforeseen banquet, gotten up on the spur of the moment," he answered. He raised himself from her chair, feeling vaguely repulsed, and leaned against the door, one of the few men whom evening dress distinguishes. He surveyed his hands critically, and lightly polished a nail while he talked.

"Judge Gibbons is in town from Washington, and the fact just leaked out. McKendry and Hopkins took the matter up, and a dinner takes place this evening at seven o'clock. I must

see three men before then, however, so I came home early to dress. I've been trying to find you ever since I came, and just thought of this bare little den of yours."

"So you won't be here for dinner?" said Amy lifelessly. She was staring at him, thinking him to be the handsomest man she had ever known, and dully conscious of her own tumbled hair and a negligée dress and dilapidation of mind and body. She was not born to immaculateness, as Kilvert was, and his absolute rectitude in the matter of dress often stirred the ready springs of resentment.

"No," said Kilvert regretfully. "That leaves you alone, of course. I had wondered if you'd like to have Mrs. Taft come down, or Francesca, or—any of them. I'll telephone for you."

"No," said Amy sharply. "Please don't. My head is splitting. It has been all day. I should send anyone home in a tearing rage."

"Let me make some sort of arrangement for you tonight," insisted Kilvert. "Francesca wouldn't annoy you in the least, and you wouldn't be alone. I shall be very late, you see."

Amy hesitated a moment. "No," she said again. "I shall be better by myself. That's good of you, Evan. Good night, then. Don't hurry home. I shall be asleep before many hours."

She let him kiss her, and watched him go away. Moved by sudden impulse, she went to her own room, and watched him step into his carriage. She turned irresolutely back. After all, it might be pleasanter to have Gerry come down. Even Francesca—but Gerry first of all, because Gerry understood so many unspeakable things. She went halfway downstairs to the telephone—she hated telephones, and there was but one in the house, downstairs.

Midway she stopped, her hands pressed against her eyes. Her lips went white. A sudden thought had come to her, a mighty impulse, which shook her as she stood in indecision.

When she let her hands drop she went quickly back, upstairs, to her own

room, pulling off her dressing-jacket as she went, snatching the confining pins from her hair. It fell in shining glory about her as she hunted desperately through her things. Where might that walking-suit be which she had brought with her, from the old home to the new one, almost the only dress she had that belonged to those old, free days! She had never had it on since her marriage, but it was the only possible thing to wear tonight.

Three years before she had known Bertie Vawtry as editor of a new magazine, started on what proved to be a meteoric career. She was twenty-five then, as was he. He had been attracted by her "Miriam Merriman" work, and had addressed a letter to her, in care of *The Tattler*, soliciting some of her manuscripts for his magazine. She chanced to have a number of ideas then which she fondly hoped might be available, and she decided to call upon him personally and talk some of them over. She had been delighted with the boy, and he with her. Before she left his office that afternoon he had naïvely confided to her most of the secrets of his venture, and the next night found him at her apartment. It had been that four-room one, with the blue walls and the tiny kitchen, and all the delights.

He was not the sort of man she had ever had her affairs with before, because he was, first of all, a boy, and Amy, from her earliest teens, had chosen her friends among men, and always men of the world. She called him indeed a boy of the world, from the first. Later it became Boy of the World, and at last and finally, Boy of All the World. It was a state of mind and heart that few men and most women will understand, that led Amy to worship Bertie Vawtry as she had never worshiped any man. He was weak, but he was so lovable. He was petulant, but he was so sweet. He was careless of obligations and far too easy-going, but he was so unutterably charming in his virtues, and most charming of all when he was at

fault. Never was there such a lover, she told him often; and, indeed, he made love as flawlessly as men of his type invariably do.

None of Amy's best friends quite approved the mad episode, although Vawtry was a favorite with all of them because of his wonderful versatility. He could play and act and sing. He could improvise, and compose, and write plays. Among the various evenings of the various women of the little coterie he shone with a great light. He was enjoying to the full his new-found right to enter into such charmed circles, which his new position as editor gave him. He found everything and everybody interesting. Francesca he honestly respected and liked; liked her better than she liked him, which spoke much for the power of her personality. Gerry he delighted in. Isabel Blair he found invaluable for her ready knowledge of people and events, and for her prodigality of ideas, which she gave out to him with regal generosity. Elinor Darling and he always sparred, always argued, never by any chance agreed.

It was Elinor indeed who came to Amy at last with a hateful tale of another woman, whose name was appearing with some regularity in Vawtry's magazine. She herself had noted the name, and Vawtry had already told her, with apparent freedom, about the woman. He had described her as old, quite thirty-five years of age, indeed, and had made clearer to Amy than her vision afterward disclosed it, a most peculiar cast which the lady unfortunately possessed in her left eye. One night, merely because Amy had insisted upon it, he brought her down to Gerry's "night in." None of them had particularly cared for Miss Eugenia Darth, and it was evident that she was stricken with no violent fancy for any of them. She gazed at them, separately and precisely, through her lorgnette, as if each was some peculiar variety of the genus genius, and she departed with Vawtry, whom she openly assumed to own, with an air

of shaking all bohemian dust from her disdainful feet.

Yet Elinor's tale was backed with much evidence. Vawtry had been seen here and there, and here again, always with Miss Darth. It was granted that his magazine was doomed from the start, because he persisted, without experience in either line, in trying to manage it both editorially and financially. The wonder had been how it had run so long. Elinor had her explanation. Miss Darth was wealthy, with a passion heretofore ungratified, for beholding her name in print. The rest followed easily, to one who knew Bertie Vawtry's easy conscience, easy morals, easy way of taking life, even if one did not know what was patent to all, that Miss Darth, while indulging her passion for literature, had developed a passion for Bertie Vawtry, to be equaled in its insanity, so Elinor frankly averred, only by Amy's wild fancy for him, small, inconsequential parasite that he was.

Amy did not confess to Elinor that she had had her scenes with Bertie over his mad taking about of Eugenia Darth. But the scene she had with him after Elinor's well-meant disclosures had never before been equaled in all their stormy story. Vawtry had made it all plain at last, however, that it was purely a question of money, and of playing on and up to the vanity of an egregiously vain woman, whose pleasure was sufficiently compassed by a little personal attention and much public printing of her name. It meant the success of the magazine, he told her, which meant marriage or postponement thereof for him and Amy, the best and dearest and most sane and generous of girls.

She turned suddenly. The waiter had come back, and was bowing inquiringly. She waved him impatiently away. What did she want of food this night! She turned back, even more decidedly, to the eyeless wall. The room was becoming noisier. Everything was louder, the talk and



the laughter and the music. The string orchestra ceased abruptly, and the room seemed to become suddenly boorish. She sighed in relief when the music began again—it might drown some of the common sounds. But presently she shrank back as if she had been struck.

"Ah-h!" she breathed. Her face twisted with her torture of mind, and she dropped her veil hastily. It had been a favorite melody two years ago with the little body of musicians, an odd arrangement whose background was the throbbing viola melody from the Eighth Symphony. They had played it that last night she and Bertie had dined together, that last night here.

Time and again that night she had asked him what the matter was. She had put forth every charm and wile, and his depression had only deepened. Once, indeed, there had come a moment when he had leaned across the tiny table, if not across this very table, at least in this very corner, and had almost told her—she would swear to that—he had almost told her. Ah, if only he had, what might she not have worked for woe to that vain woman! He had almost told her! But she, senseless, suspicionless thing, had laughed at those words of his so openly caught back, and had dismissed his mood as a slight thing! All but his kisses that night as he told her good-bye. Never to her dying day would she forget them, precursors that they were of that telegram which reached her just twenty-four hours later. She had received many telegrams since, but never one without hysteric emotion, so branded was the content of that yellow envelope on her mind and soul.

"Forgive me," it ran. "I married Eugenia Darth tonight. I should have told you. Forgive me."

His letter came the next day, wild, incoherent, breathing undying love for her, and a passion the more furious because it was balked. His fate had overtaken him, and his despair was frantic. Eugenia Darth had advanced

much money. He found himself at last too greatly in her debt to escape—this had been her solution.

Amy Kilvert pressed her hands hard against her face. Would that music never stop? Would those strings forever throb? That they should be playing that piece of all things tonight! Someone had called for it again—fool!—and they were beginning the odd little arrangement from the first.

She turned swiftly back and faced the room. Anything was better than that blank wall, anything which might distract her mind from its torment, if it were but a menu card. She felt blindly about the table for one. And then she stopped her gropings, her hands lying where her great amazement froze them, her face turning whiter and whiter and then colder and more cold. Someone, a man, had come quickly over to her, and was already taking the seat across from her. He had knocked, almost needlessly, it seemed to her blurred eyes, into another man who was also coming in her direction. The room swirled before her eyes. She put out a nerveless hand.

"Bertie Vawtry—you!" she whispered, her voice a frozen sound.

She felt her hand caught in a hand which she would have known out of a world of phantom hands and ghost-like claspings. She dimly saw him, with his other hand, lay hold of a fleeing waiter by a flying coattail.

"Bring a hot Scotch, and be quick about it," he said. "And two Martinis, quick! Move!"

## VIII

"WELL!" said Vawtry at last. His hand still held Amy's. He had not released it, even when the waiter brought the drinks, nor while Amy was drinking the steaming fluid which was to make her blood run warm again.

She had been sitting before him,

blinded, her head swimming, powerless to move or to speak. She knew that if she opened her lips a scream would ring from her throat, and she shut them tight against it. The waiter, moved by Vawtry's stern command, was back almost instantly, but it seemed a thousand years to Amy before Vawtry pushed a glass toward her. She lifted it, and drained it eagerly. It was as she put it from her that Vawtry spoke.

Before that word of his she had been a woman almost at the stage of absolute collapse. The sound of his voice acted like a whip on her stunned senses.

"How did you do it?" she whispered gaspingly. "Have the courage to come to me—here—and speak to me—"

"Because you were here," said Vawtry savagely, brutally.

Amy flushed darkly, flushed for the first time, it seemed to her, in years. The more she tried to beat back the flood of shame, the more furious were its waves. It was true; she was here, at this very table, listening to the same music.

She threw up her head with the old, reckless toss Bertie Vawtry remembered as he remembered few things. The color still lingered on her face, so white before. What mattered! She had not meant to come here tonight, had not planned it. She had been driven here. If she had dreamed that Vawtry was to be here, too, she would have gone away from this place as far and as fast as she could, gone north on the wings of the wind. But she was here, hopelessly entangled from the start, hopelessly enmeshed. Her whole life was a series of blunders, she told herself, and this one—she could see the grinnings of the gods at her helplessness. For here she had come, to keep her last mad revel with Memory, and yonder it sat, across from her, embodied in Bertie Vawtry's flesh!

"Yes," she said deliberately. "That would give you courage, naturally—at last!"

It was Vawtry's turn to flush under the scorn in her eyes. She did not wait for him to speak, but she laughed a laugh which matched her eyes, and beckoned to a waiter.

"Oh, I have engaged his services long since," she said in reply to Vawtry's protest. "No, you will dine with me tonight, my dear Bertie, or you will get quietly up and go away and leave me to myself. I shall tell you I had really planned a dinner alone tonight."

A glance at Vawtry's face told her there was no doubt of his staying, whatever the conditions she imposed. So Amy Kilvert ordered, choosing, with deliberate malice against the man and herself, dishes which had potent memories lurking in their savory depths, and she pointed their significances delicately to him, with each definite charge to the waiter. In visible need for self-defense, Vawtry lighted a cigarette, and, while he smoked it silently, surveyed her; shining hair, dark eyes, slender figure and undulating grace—all as it had been two years before. It was like a figment of a dream.

She dismissed the man at last, and turned to Vawtry. She reached out her slender hand for one of the cocktail glasses, and she began to play with the olive in it. Her eyes were full of malice.

"Well!" she said, in mocking repetition of his gambit. "How goes the play, Bertie? And the candle—is it burning brightly, or does it flicker at times?"

Vawtry leaned back, and blew tiny rings rapidly upward toward the dingy ceiling. Truly this bohemian spot was physically unclean. Amy had felt it when she first entered the place tonight. She followed Vawtry's eyes, and she wondered if he was feeling it now, the dirt, the blackened walls, the lack of the old-time charm. While his eyes were following the tiny blue rings in their leisurely flight she let her eyes rest for a scant moment on him. He was tall and slender as he had always been, with his beautiful

Greek head whose contour she had worshiped—God help her!

He looked at her at last, long after her eyes had been averted. "Have you an idea of how long you sat here, with this chair tipped down?" he asked her. "One hour, from the time you entered. I was here already. You were attracting notice. I might have come over here at last, I grant you, but I shouldn't have come so soon, if a hulking brute of a beast hadn't lurched over just ahead of me."

Amy remembered the slight scuffle near her, which had immediately preceded Vawtry's appearance. Her heart leaped within her. She was independent, yes, and able to take care of herself; but she loved to be taken care of, and her gratitude to Vawtry now was quite out of proportion to the service rendered. It softened her—dangerously—and Vawtry saw it.

"I should have come to you at last, certainly," he added.

Amy did not reply. She was twirling her empty glass. Speech had left her, and again her lips looked frozen.

"Because," Vawtry added deliberately, "you have always been the one woman I have ever loved, always—you always will be."

Amy smiled, with those frozen lips. "You should tell that to the woman you married," she said with what she knew was unpardonably bad taste. But the whole thing was bad taste, and she could think of nothing else to say, and say something she must. She must not let him do all the talking, with his wonderful voice, and his terrible power of influencing her. So her words rushed headlong to meet a reward they merited.

"The woman I married is dead," said Bertie Vawtry.

She stared at him helplessly. What a horrible thing for her to have said, and at what disadvantage she was again placed! Eugenia Darth dead—that tall, solidly built, aggressively strong woman! That left him, Vawtry, free, free! She found that thought uppermost.

"She died six months ago," Vawtry

continued after a moment's silence. "Suddenly a strange fever took her and she went under without a single spurt of resistance. Yes, it was shocking, I dare say. Not so shocking as it might have been had she not had all her papers ready for filing her suit for divorce as soon as we should return. I found them, all her correspondence with her New York lawyer. That naturally stilled any too excessive grief of mine at her untimely taking off."

"The charge?" Amy asked, with curling lips.

"Merely non-support," Vawtry answered lightly. "There had been unpleasantnesses from the first. But I really allowed myself to be caught napping; I confess to distinct surprise over that post-mortem discovery. That suit was to be a master stroke, a master surprise. And then the grim reaper stepped sardonically along and turned the edge of the joke with his scythe!"

"You cad!" said Amy Kilvert. She half rose from her chair, just as the waiter came with the oysters. At the man's look of surprise, she sat weakly down again. If he had not come just then she felt she should have walked from the place without a backward glance. But he was there, sent by the jesting gods, to thrust her back into her seat.

She even laughed a little as she lifted an oyster from its shell. She had always had a sense of humor, had Amy, however tinged with bitterness it might be. Such "copy" as this evening might make! She leaned back and laughed again. Vawtry flinched under her laugh as he had not flinched under "cad."

"Come," she said decisively. "We'll have no more walking of ghosts from any part of the past. We'll eat and drink together a last good dinner, and then you shall put me in a cab and say good night, and I shall go—" She stopped dead short.

Vawtry glanced over at her. His dark eyes narrowed. They were flaming, and his lips were set. "I had heard of it," he said. He pushed his untasted oysters from him. "So you

are married, Amy! I heard it just before I was to have sailed for home, six months ago. The bit of news changed my plans. I toured a bit, instead—Greece, the islands thereabouts, some of those bits of opal sea we were to have cruised upon together, Amy, if the cursed money had only come in time. It's come at last, but it's come too late!"

Amy laughed again. She could hardly scream, could hardly spring at him and tear madly at his beautiful face. So she laughed instead—and sneered.

"On the devoted Eugenia's money!" she said. "How dreadful you didn't cable me as soon as there was hope, Bertie! It might have reached me on my wedding morning."

"It would have reached you on your wedding morning," said Vawtry grimly.

Amy caught her breath, aghast. What if it had! Vawtry read her thought in her terror-filled eyes.

"Of course, the bad taste of such a cablegram was too palpable to be overlooked!" he said. "Indeed, I must do myself the common justice and decency of asserting that I really did not think of such a thing until I began to make my grim discoveries. When they were complete I confess that the total aspect of my sense of duty to old bonds was changed, but I decided not to cable you, but to come to you—and found myself to be too late, even to redeem my passage. I calculated it out once, and it is really true that, if I had cabled you the morning that she died the news would have come as a unique wedding congratulation."

Amy smiled again and felt her lips twist suddenly beneath the smile. Her voice came huskily, tearing at her throat in its passage.

"Oh, let us stop this horrible, horrible talk! Anything is better than it."

Vawtry touched her shaking hand again with his slender, white, magnetic one.

"It is horrible," he said grimly. "But the entire situation is horrible. Well, what shall we talk about?"

"Anything!" said Amy.

Vawtry lifted his hand slowly from hers. She began to speak hastily of Gerry, of Elinor, of Lennie Rhodes and his new book. Vawtry fell into her piteous humor for impersonal topics, with that flexible adaptability of his which was always more a feminine than a masculine quality, and throughout the dinner they held firmly to gossip of people they knew.

But, despite Amy's best endeavors, silences began to fall, tiny ones at first, and then long ones. The ices came, and then the cheese and coffee, and words between the two had almost ceased. Amy's eyes were lowered. Her slender fingers were nervously crumbling bits of cracker to powder fine as the fabled product of the mills of fate. Vawtry folded his arms at last upon the table and stared broodingly at her face.

"It's cursedly impudent of me," he said harshly. "I've forfeited any right to know, but I've got to know it, all the same. Are you reasonably happy, Amy? Don't hurl yourself at me that way. You're not—you're not! I'll spare you the verbal answer, Amy! You see, I read 'The Good Man,' Amy! I accepted it, in fact."

Amy's burst of incoherent fury vanished before her blank amazement.

"You took it!" she stammered.

"Precisely!" said Vawtry moodily. "I'm editor and owner of *The Tattler* now. It was going under, and I had the chance. It's the only sort of thing I was ever interested in—that first venture went up in smoke as soon as we were out of the country; she refused point-blank to sink any more of her money in the hole she said it was. Well—" Vawtry's jaw snapped together. In a moment he went on: "I hadn't been in charge a week before your story came in—it was the first one I accepted; the forms had been closed, but I had them torn apart and 'The Good Man' put up. The manuscript gave me your address. I walked up there that evening and stared at the outside of your prison. Since then I've waited for other stories, but they've never come. I wrote



once for some—last week—had Ross write.”

He pushed a box of cigarettes toward her, and Amy took one up and lighted it fiercely. The old recklessness had come back; she knew herself to be under a curious spell, a wild and varying one; but where lay the use of anything! She had pride, somewhere, but it was beaten down. Vawtry had found her—here! He had a right to think from that what he would. Vawtry had read that dreadful story, had taken it, even, for publication. She sat upright and stared blankly ahead of her. That was what Gerry knew, what Gerry meant, that day when she had questioned her so closely about the time when ‘The Good Man’ had come out, had been sent in; when she had extracted that solemn promise that no more stories should go to *The Tatler* office! But the harm was done! Vawtry would think but one thing from that story, and he had a right to his conclusions. Everything she did was wrong, now and always. She had made a yeasty mess of her whole life; it sickened her—sickened her!

She took one puff at her cigarette, and then she held it off and stared at it, her eyes narrowing.

“It’s forbidden, Bertie,” she said lightly. “‘Miriam Merriman’—and these!”

He watched her hand as it filiped the box of cigarettes half across the table, the hand that wore Kilvert’s wedding-ring.

“God!” he said briefly. “He *is* good.”

Amy flinched, and was surprised thereat. It restored her to sanity, however; showed her her last serious blunder in daring to criticize Kilvert before this man. She lifted her cigarette to her lips again and smoked it swiftly. What had she been going to do?—tell him—this man—of her troubles, her unhappinesses with cause and without; this man, who, two years before, had jilted her as cruelly as ever woman was thrown aside? Her self-contempt rose steadily. She

could not flay Vawtry for sneering when she had so definitely pointed the way.

She tossed her cigarette lightly from her and picked up her gloves. She beckoned to the waiter and he came with the bill. It had been a long time since she had noticed him about, even though Vawtry, since their dinner, had ordered several drinks. For the first time since Vawtry had joined her she glanced about the room. It was filled yet, but with a totally different crowd, not of diners, but of roysterers.

As the bill was laid before her Vawtry bent quickly forward, but Amy slipped it swiftly from beneath his hand. She gave the waiter a bill and waved away idea of change accruing. As he moved off she called him back. “Get me a hansom,” she said.

Vawtry looked determined. “I am going to see you safely home.”

Amy smiled slightly. “In five minutes we will say good-bye, Bertie,” she said. “I came here tonight for a last revel with the old, free days, thinking this place would be a haven—and I find it dirty and unclean and the food cheap and bad and the music full of discords—all these faults in what I once delighted in. And you, Bertie, have pointed the final moral.”

“I?” said Vawtry.

Amy smiled in sudden glee at the surprise in his tone. “You!” she said. “Even you. That the past belongs to the past; that much of the old life was like this place, unclean and cheap and bad and none of us knew it, because we had the spirit of youth and its blindness——”

She stopped suddenly. She rose to her feet and stood, looking down at Vawtry’s bent head. Her pride had come back to save her.

“You have pointed the moral to all of it,” she said, “the uncleanness and the cheapness and the badness. You had no right ever to speak to me again; and yet, finding me here tonight, you will say it gave you the right—I wonder if a woman could have taken it—of coming to me. And so we have dined together——”

"At your expense," interpolated Vawtry.

"It has all been at my expense," said Amy Kilvert swiftly. "That is what I have learned tonight. No, I'll not take your hand. Why should I? In token that I forgive? Pah! Forgiveness could never cover the case. It would take the maddest love, the wildest passion, the sort of thing I shall never feel again in all the world. Ah, good night!—"

Vawtry had risen to his feet, too, and stood watching her as she swept through the room. He could not believe it, that the meeting had come and gone! And he could not understand, as she disappeared at last from his sight, why he had allowed her to go alone, why even now he could not follow her! But to find her in this mixture of minds and moods—it had left him totally ignorant of where he stood with her. She had shown him that she despised him, and he winced. And then he wondered, wondered if it might be that she loved him yet—and the thrill of pure delight that ran through him showed him beyond shadow of doubt where he stood. He sat down and began to smoke, cigarette after cigarette, rapidly, excitedly. His brain was full of wild dreamings, wilder plannings, nebulous purposes.

Amy, meantime, went swiftly down the short flight of steps, and threw herself into the cab. She gave the man her address, and then she sank back against the cushions, and covered her face with her hands, hiding even from the blackness of the night, and drew long, shuddering breaths. Such results as this mad freak of hers had brought!

She writhed with shame as she saw with sudden clearness how small an amount of anger she had shown to Bertie Vawtry, for the wanton deed he had done her. She felt as if some impish hands had taken up her brain and wrung it into odd, fantastic shapes, so hard was it for her to see clearly. All these two years she had

burned with wild resentment against Vawtry. She had married Evan Kilvert in resentment against Vawtry. She had fled down here tonight in resentment against Vawtry—and, finding him here also, her anger had died down; at best, had flamed but fitfully. Even now she drew a quivering breath as she remembered that beautiful face of his, the look in his eyes, the magnetic touch of his magnetic hands, those hands whose touch she had recognized before she had believed that it could be he. She knew that she ought to be furiously angry, but she found no anger left in her, only weariness and heart-sickness. She told herself, in extenuation of her crime against herself, that it was because she knew him so well, and knowing him, must excuse him much.

Suddenly she started, almost to her feet. She sat upright, tense and keyed up again. She called to the driver, bade him hurry, hurry! She had remembered a fact all but forgotten, that she was going home to Kilvert. She was in no mood for lies tonight, and she doubted if she could tell them, were he to have reached home before her. She realized that she had absolutely no idea what time it was—ten or twelve or two—it might be any or no one of the hours! Panic seized her, and anger thereat. She was afraid of Kilvert, afraid of meeting him, of facing his keen, steady, unswerving eyes.

When the man stopped she thrust a bill into his hands far in excess of the fare, and waved him away. She had no time to wait for change. She ran up the steps and inserted her latch-key with shaking fingers. Before she turned it once, the door opened, and Kilvert, standing there, took her by the wrist, and drew her into the hall.

## IX

KILVERT undid the fur about her throat and threw it to the floor. She glanced at him once, and her eyes

dropped before his. How she hated them—steady, unswerving, keen, unwinking! Already her golden second for speech had passed; silence was now the only thing left her, and it was neither silver nor golden. If only she had been prudent enough to have had her lie thought up! But she had not—she did not even know what time it was.

Kilvert at last stepped back. Not a full moment had passed, but the tenseness of the seconds broke her, and she went quite to pieces. She spoke quickly, senselessly:

"I suppose it's late, or you wouldn't be up. Gerry and I had a lot to talk about——"

Kilvert raised his hand. "Spare yourself and me this sort of thing, Amy."

Amy's brain had raced along—of course, he would telephone there first—or to Francesca—he had spoken of those two.

"I mean Elinor," she said, with a last mad throw. "I——"

She broke again, for Kilvert's cool hand was again upon her wrist.

"Stop!" he said. The word rang out, stern, compelling. He caught his underlip for a brief space. When he spoke again his voice was as level as usual.

"It is after two o'clock," he said. "Naturally I became alarmed some time ago. There seemed nothing to do but wait, however——"

"You didn't telephone!" Amy gasped.

Kilvert looked at her coldly. He relinquished her wrist, and moved away a few steps.

"I did not telephone," he said briefly. "I have no desire to have it a matter of remark that I seek my wife by telephone after midnight. I had hoped you were at Mrs. Taft's."

Amy raised her head, but again those steady eyes confronted her. For want of something better to do, she curled her lips and laughed a little.

"You might have had Maggie call for you," she suggested. "Maggie's voice sounds quite ladylike through a telephone."

"Nor do I take my servants into my confidence," said Kilvert. "James is in bed this long while now."

He stood, waiting, as Amy knew. If only she had not begun to lie without having an idea of what her lie should be. She felt no confidence in her powers to deceive this man. She felt unstrung, broken, and suddenly an insanely furious rage against Kilvert seized her. She had come home heart-sick and mourning, to this taking to task, this calling to account. She laughed again.

"I should have telephoned you from Elinor's," she said carelessly, "but she's so far up, and the telephone's on the ground floor. No gentleman could ask that of a lady, could he, Evan? So I didn't. Good night; I'm tired to death——"

She slipped past him, furtively, desperately. Halfway up the stairs she paused to glance back. Kilvert was standing against the staircasing, following with his eyes her fleeing figure. She stumbled against a step and almost fell, but she caught herself, and rushed on. A sort of terror that belongs distinctively to childhood seized her, terror of what might be following after her. She kept her head turned, so as to have Kilvert within sight, until she reached her own room, and was inside it.

She leaned against the wall, her hands pressed against her face. Was it all worth it? What if she should go down those stairs now, straight down, and up to him, and say, "Two years ago a man threw me over for a woman who could bring him money, and later, loving him still, I married you, because you came offering to take me and clothe me, on the one condition that I cared for you at least as much as I cared for any other man. I let you believe that, and that I cared for you more than for anyone else, because I never dreamed of the torment that lie would bring me. And now he has come back—free, and I am bound——"

She caught herself up, and hurled herself more fiercely against the sheltering wall. If it meant death to refuse,

she could not go down to her husband and say those words to him. She feared him more tonight than she had ever feared anyone in all her fearless life.

She felt chilled and trembling. Her hands shook as she drew off her gloves. Two or three stray hairs had been swaying across her face all evening, and she grew suddenly weary of futile replacings, and pulled them out and cast them from her. She looked toward her bed, already turned down and waiting for her, piled with its rose-colored blankets, to warm her chilled, bloodless body. She moved toward it helplessly.

Halfway across the room she stopped short. There was no sleep for her—yet. That lie she had told him and had persisted in, even in the face of his virtual charge that she was lying—how easy it would be for him to disprove it!

She stood still, trying to think. She wondered if it would be like a man to do such a thing, to call up Elinor Darling the next day, and incidentally find out if she had had callers the night before, and their names. There were a thousand ways in which he might do it, without rousing suspicion even in Elinor Darling's shrewd brain. Almost had she decided that it would not be like a man to do such a thing—and, ah, she was so cold and weary—at least no man of Kilvert's type, when her clock chimed the hour, half-past two. Half-past two! Late enough in all truth for a wife's return after unexplained absence, and ample cause for an aggrieved husband to act!

Panic seized her again. She opened her door cautiously and peered out. Kilvert was still standing in the hall below. Even as she looked, she saw him rouse himself, and move away toward his library. She waited till she heard the click of the library door as it closed. That must mean an hour at least before he would come upstairs. At all events, it was her chance. If he should take it into his head to telephone Elinor, there was no telling at what time he might do it, and when she was once asleep through the aid of those

bromides nestling in a hidden drawer, she did not know when she would waken.

She took off her street shoes, and slipped her feet into soft Turkish slippers. She unfastened her belt, preparatory to getting into a soft kimono, but nervous desire to make haste held her back. She slipped carefully from her room, and across the hall to the stairway and down it. The telephone was in a small apartment off the dining-room. There were plenty of doors between it and the library. It would not be possible for Kilvert to hear her. Yet cold fear shook her as she crept along.

She found herself safely at last within the tiny room. She had managed it without light and without noise. She bent her slender body low over the shining instrument.

"Hello!" she called softly, her lips close to the mouthpiece, and her hand clasped about it, to muffle her tones. "Hello! Give me Madison 2222—2222. Yes. . . . Ring them again. You must, Central. Ring them again!"

She waited, every nerve alert at last, and every muscle tense. There was no sound anywhere save the blur of the ringing bell two miles away. Suddenly she bent close again.

"Yes? Hello! Is this the Caledonia? Call Miss Darling for me right away. Miss Elinor Darling. Yes, Elinor Darling——"

A shaft of yellow light fell on her through the quickly opened door behind her, and then a heavy shadow. Amy turned and screamed, and dropped the receiver. Kilvert picked it up as it swung against the table. He reached out his other hand, and laid it once again on Amy's wrist, as he called:

"Hello! The Caledonia? Don't call Miss Darling; it is a mistake."

Kilvert hung up the receiver carefully, and then he turned to his wife, shrinking, like a hunted thing, against the wall.

"It is a mistake," he repeated. "I will have no vulgar intriguings of this sort."



Amy's head went fiercely up. "Intriguings!" she said.

"Of this sort," Kilvert repeated steadily. He led her through the dining-room, his hand still resting lightly on hers. When they reached the door of the library, which stood wide, Kilvert stopped, and checked Amy in her wild steps forward.

"May we talk a little together, absurd as the hour is?" he asked.

But his tone was not a question, and Amy went through no empty form of giving permission. Instead, she entered the room as if it were a jail, and her jailer just behind her.

## X

KILVERT pushed forward a chair for her, and she sank nervelessly into it. He did not sit down, but stood in front of her, with his hands clasped behind him, resting hard against a table.

"I think I should have said nothing more to you about this night's escape," he began slowly. "It is a question of delicate balance, with much to be argued and more to be decided either way. But I hardly think I should have said anything more to you about something you are so evidently averse to discussing, had you not tried this really low bit of trickery which I happened to overhear, and which I am glad to know I was able to cut short. I confess myself angry at this. I have always thought you played a square game, Amy. I should never have dreamed you capable of resorting to such palpable make-up. But with this latest development tonight, there remains a word or two to say."

He paused a moment, looking down at her pale face, sharpened by her struggles of weeks.

"When I married you," he began slowly, "I did it with my eyes open. Even with the half-love I believed you had for me, and the entire devotion I offered you, I knew that for both of us there would come bad hours and days—months, perhaps, before the sharing of our two lives could become a perfected

thing. I knew that you would never have married me unless I could offer you such things as this." His hand went out about the room. "I never believed that you could marry me, merely because I came, offering wealth; although I confess to realizing, with a keenness mercifully given to few men, I dare hope, the entire selfishness of what I called your love for me. Long ago I had to own that you held no love for me in your heart, to help you through. Knowing this, what was there of aid I could offer, save my silence, and solitude, when you began to chafe and fret and strain against the bond that binds you to me! I have held aloof, waiting for you to see what is true, that my love for you is the stanchest thing that has ever come into your life. It has lived against great odds. It will continue to live, doubtless against greater ones. However——"

He paused after the last sharp-flung word, and straightened himself.

"Of this night's work there remains this for me to say. I swore from the first that I would never compel you to anything against your will, that you should remain the free thing you were born. I never realized, until marriage put its bonds upon me, too, that in your sense of the word, freedom in marriage is an impossible thing. Marriage is merciless in its intimacies—we are both finding that out. No man has ever known you as I have come to know you—the curious workings of your fevered brain, the curious code of philosophy and morals you have evolved from life. And no woman has ever known me so thoroughly to judge me so mercilessly as you. I have a great love, to be hurt indeed, but to aid me—you have nothing. And so, for weeks, you have been hiding from me, deceiving me in countless ways, feigning illness, feigning sleep. Tonight, when I told you I was going away for the entire evening, do you think I did not see the flash of light leap to your eyes? Why——"

Amy looked up. "Evan!" she cried hoarsely.

He stopped her. "When I came back and found you gone, I saw that I had expected just such a thing—in fact, I have grown to expect anything from you that you do. Now, where you happened to go tonight matters to me nothing—nothing! What matters is your pitiful deception about it, and your outrageous attempt to drag an outsider into my affairs and yours. I know as well as you that you went to none of those friends' houses tonight—let the matter rest there."

He stopped again. When he went on, his voice was slightly lowered, but cold and stern.

"I shall ask you, however, to remember this for the future, and to forget it never—that you share my name, that my name is yours, and that there must be no playing with it. The unconventional things you did before you were married to me must, many of them, go by the boards from now on. Innocent enough, then, they lose their innocence and become mere bravado when you do them now. The spirit which made them clean then is not yours to have now, for you no longer belong to yourself solely, but to me; and although I shall never press that claim in such wise as to embarrass you seriously in private or in public, yet there are certain things which you must guard, and one of them is the name you deliberately chose to take."

He had reached the end at last. Amy sat, stabbing her hat fiercely through and through with its long pins. After a moment of silence Kilvert bent down and held out his hand.

"It is past three," he said quietly. "Your nerves are in a wretched state. Will you go up now and try to get some natural sleep? Let the bromides go, however, even if you don't sleep at all. You can't afford to let that habit grow, Amy."

Still she sat, ignoring his hand, pulling the pins slowly from her hat. She began to speak at last, rapidly, gaspingly.

"I meant to get in before you came; there wasn't any harm in what I meant to do—to go to a little place—I used—

to go to and have one last fling all by myself before I settled down to begin it all over again. When I got there I—got to thinking; I hurried home—I hadn't an idea of the time—" Her voice trailed into sickening silence.

Kilvert's jaw was rigid as he stared down at her. He felt perfectly sure of much of the real state of affairs. He had told Amy tonight he knew she did not love him. He had held back his damning conviction that she loved another man, a conviction which he had smothered for many weeks, and which tonight seemed to spring alive and mighty from his brain. As he listened to her now he felt absolutely sure that she had seen the man, whoever he might be, this night. Of more than that he refused to think. Even her hour of home-coming did not shake his faith in her clean-mindedness and honesty. And yet these lies, these lies!

He reached out his hand again and drew her to her feet.

"You are very tired and worn," he said. "I shouldn't try to talk any more tonight, if I were you. And, Amy, never try to talk of this again until we can sit down together, man and woman, and talk soul to soul. You are not willing to tell me the whole truth about this thing; then let the matter rest in silence. Never try to tell me half-truths or worse."

She turned from him abruptly and moved toward the door. She felt suddenly and miserably conscious of her shabby appearance, her old street suit and her knockabout hat and her absurd slippers, compared to his immaculate evening dress. As she reached the door she turned sharply on him.

"Evan, you don't think—?" she stammered.

Kilvert came close to her and opened the door for her. "I think—nothing," he said, "except that such a thing as this must never occur again—never, Amy."

He watched the door slam fiercely behind her. He stood without stirring until its vibrations had died. Then he went slowly back to the table, where lay a worn, cheap copy of a play, an

acting edition. He picked it up absently. He knew it practically by heart, "Hedda Gabler."

"Am I like that weak fool, Tesman?" he asked of himself. "Because I give her her head, let her come and go, allow her to shut me from her when she wishes and admit me when she can endure me? Is it strength or weakness that makes me let her go her gait, that makes me love her yet, a woman who married me because she was sick and tired of making her own way for herself and as a safe haven from—God knows what, or who!"

He stared moodily down at the book; then he tossed it into a private drawer and went up to his room, past Amy's door, shut and bolted fast. Through the door that stood between them, shut and locked, he knew, he heard her sobs and smothered moans at intervals all the long night through. For, though the night was almost gone, the dawn brought no cheering light, only purple cloud and beating rain; and the slow, wakeful minutes stretched to hours for them both.

## XI

DURING the next week Amy paid the penalty of that night's nerve-dissipation with an illness that was not feigned. Indeed, after the first day she had a nurse, because her nights were sleepless and her nerves would not admit of sleeping-drugs. Night after night she begged for bromides, chloral, anything to make her forget she was living; and for sole answer she received soothing rubbings which, after a time, worked their good results.

During that week she saw Kilvert twice, and those two occasions came early in the week. On all the other days he sent up messages which called for responses if he were to follow them in person, and Amy turned on her pillow in shame and could not send them. Nothing could ever move smoothly again, she thought wearily, until she confessed the whole story of that night, and less and less was she able to speak

Bertie Vawtry's name to Kilvert. She told herself it was not as if Kilvert knew anything of the man, as if she might tell him things of Lennie Rhodes or Harry Martin or the countless others of whom he knew at least something. For Vawtry's name would ring strangely on his ears; she could not compass the preliminaries, let alone the story itself.

She began to move about the house at last, weak and nerveless, but restless as a flame. Her face looked sharpened and more pale, as if some inward fire were indeed consuming her. She went to see Germaine once and cut her visit short. She had thought she might find relief there, but there was none anywhere. Gerry had warned her faithfully of Vawtry's presence in town, and the warning had done her no good; she had only rushed all the more headlong into the most insidious of meetings. She could not tell Gerry of it, any more than she could tell Kilvert, and the constraint of that visit was too heavy to endure.

One day she went down to luncheon, weary and depressed. She picked up a morning paper as she went into the dining-room and turned to its lists of amusements. It just occurred to her it was matinee afternoon. She found nothing there which irresistibly caught her fancy. "Carmen" was on at the Metropolitan, however, and she decided idly to call up Germaine, who never got enough of songs and singers, and ask her to go to hear Calvé.

She felt a shudder creep through her disordered nerves as she stepped into the telephone-room. She had not entered the place since that night two weeks ago when she had looked up from her whispered call to see Kilvert standing in the doorway. She called her number hastily and turned away disappointed. It was Gerry's competent little maid who answered. Mrs. Taft was away for the day.

Amy walked through the hall, hesitating. She disliked to go alone. She disliked the thought of going with anybody else. Most of all she disliked to stay in that afternoon. She went up-

stairs still hesitating and dressed hesitatingly. She decided at last to wear her brown velvet gown with its striking coat and lace bodice. She felt a faint interest as she settled her hat into exact line. Elaine always knew what suited her customers best, even though she had had Mrs. Kilvert's custom for but two brief seasons.

She was still hesitating between grand opera and musical comedy as she put her foot upon the step of her victoria. She found herself saying, "The Metropolitan," without having really reached a conclusion. She laughed a little as she settled back against the cushions. The only reason she had said "The Metropolitan" was because she could not, for the life of her, recall the name of the play-house where the comedy in question was running. She tried to recall it all through the drive, but with no success.

She sent Thomas in to see about her ticket, and when he brought it out to her she scanned it critically. She almost wished to find some fault with it which might make it possible for her to send him back with her haughty complaint that he had been imposed upon. Her brief fancy for "Carmen" and Calvé had died the death. But there was no fault to find. She had designated from the sixth to the eighth rows and an aisle seat, and she held a seventh-row seat on the centre aisle. She ordered the victoria for the precise moment of dismissal and went her slightly disgusted way.

She was rather early—the curtain would not rise for fifteen minutes. The ushers increased their pace rapidly. The aisles became one continuous stream of women. She was more than ever sorry that she had come. She did not care for matinee performances, her argument being that the lack of men to play to made the playing both of the men and women on the stage less virile and less conscientious.

She had to rise several times while her row was filling up. The last party was made up of three; enough, she thought, to fill the remaining vacant seats. It annoyed her to see the one

seat next her still unoccupied. The girl just beyond it was dainty and lovely—and small. Amy had a horror of large people who overflowed the narrow bounds of their opera chairs onto her. How unfortunate that this pretty girl was not to sit next to her!

"I beg your pardon," said a voice beside her. "The usher tells me the next seat is——"

She looked up into Vawtry's face. Her face was deathly white. She sat quite still.

"I do not believe you," she said between her teeth. "It is a trick."

Vawtry held out his seat check. "I bought it ten minutes ago," he said. "Two seats had just been returned, the man said, and the aisle seat had just been resold."

Still Amy did not move. She looked at him insolently as he stood above her.

"If it had been Tannhäuser," she said, with consummate daring, "I could not doubt it is all your trick. That poor opera quite goes with this sort of thing—the Venus motifs and all that."

"Some of this is quite as devilish as Tannhäuser can hope to be," said Vawtry smoothly. "Can you listen unmoved—or do you command me to seek other accommodations?"

Amy Kilvert rose with studied insolence, and took the inside seat. "Stay, by all means," she said icily.

Vawtry murmured soft thanks as she gave up her seat to him. He sat down, quite conscious that he should have spared her and himself, as he might have easily done, although the coincidence was genuine. But he did not care to spare either himself or her. His veins were running molten fire at this unexpected sight of her. He had always loved her. His marriage—and hers most of all—had but piled the fuel higher. He did not even try to go away, but it is a fact that he could not have gone, even with all his will exerted.

Before the curtain went up, neither of them spoke. There was a pause quite as long after the curtain went down. Vawtry finally turned to her.



"You are making this very hard for me, Amy," he said.

It was a superbly artistic bit of speech. Amy groped vainly after a seam in its polished surfaces. Turn it as she might she could not find a flaw. Hard for him, when it was he who was making it hellish for her! But could she tell him that? For her pride's sake she could not cast back reproach. She found the springs of ready retort dried within her, her sense of values blunted, her only refuge silence, and that a thin and paltry one.

After a moment Vawtry went swiftly on: "I can never forgive myself for letting you go home alone that night. If I had dreamed what time it was, wild horses could not have taken you from me—alone. It must have been after two when you reached home." He paused; then he laid his hand softly over hers. "Tell me, Amy, you did not suffer for it?"

"I did not suffer for it," said Amy, in bitter obedience.

Vawtry was silent a moment. When he spoke his voice was full of pain.

"I can never forgive myself for the whole of it," he said. "I should have protected you from—everything that night, not from the night alone. I should have known what the hour was, should have sent you from me in good season—it was terrible for you to reach that home of yours at such an hour—my poor girl!"

"I did not suffer from your lack of care," said Amy once again, with painful precision.

Again Vawtry allowed the heavy silence to fall between them. His dark eyes scanned her white face keenly, longingly, with fierce desire. What a mad fool he had been, to have run any risks of losing this slender, glowing bit of womanhood, flame to him, and ice, he knew, to the man she had madly married! It was impossible not to see how greatly moved she was. Even if it were hate she felt for him, it were ten thousand times better than indifference.

"How strange our fate has been!" he murmured at length. "It has been

without seeking, Amy, that we have met on these two occasions so intimately, so horribly apart from the chattering crowds that have been about us. Do you dare say there is nothing in it?"

Dare—when she knew the bare chances of this meeting as he could not! How well he knew that strain of fatalism in her! How often they had talked over this very thing in the old days! How many of their lover's meetings had been made up of just such curious coincidences! Chance had never figured so potently in any other part of her life. How could she but believe in it, in spite of herself! Yet she answered him harshly.

"Coincidences are common things, almost getting to be those things which do not happen."

The curtain signal came just then, and she thanked heaven that she had had the last word, however poor a thing it must be reckoned.

Throughout the entire second act Vawtry sat well forward, his eyes deliberately out of range of Amy. Yet he knew that through all the act her eyes did not waver from starved sight of him, his head so wonderfully Greek, his face, delicate, artistic, beautiful. She leaned far back, watching him. Always his beauty had fascinated her, warmed her, charmed her. She could not explain it; she had never been able to explain it, and she had tried.

With the second intermission he turned suddenly to her, and caught the swift flaming of her startled blood, and the shamed drooping of her eyes. But for all he said or looked that flush and telltale start might not have been. He began to talk of impersonal things, delightfully, enthrallingly. There seemed no more need for Amy to fight fierce battle for the right word to say—it leaped now swiftly to her tongue. No responsibility was hers any longer—hers it was merely to enjoy. Vawtry suddenly shouldered all the burden of this meeting. He suggested promising once, but she hastily demurred. Both she and Vawtry knew too many

people who might be here this afternoon. So they sat and talked.

When the opera was ended, Vawtry helped her lingeringly with her outdoor things, and his eyes told what they also said his tongue was afraid to utter. He was like a woman about woman's clothes. She knew that he knew the significance of the name within her velvet coat, the touches on her hat that bespoke its origin, the quality of her exquisite furs. At least she had these things to sweeten the bitterness of her self-betrayal into the hands of her enemy. If he had wealth now, she, too, had its luxuries; she hated herself for her ignoble triumphing, but the feeling stayed with her.

They went out slowly. She had given him her carriage-check, and had regretted it immediately. If his audacity should lead him to ask her for a seat in her victoria, what would she say? When he came back to her she saw, with a thrill of actual relief, that he was accompanied by a tall, beautiful, strikingly dressed woman, whom he introduced as Mrs. Styles. With that multiple knowledge of things which her life had given her, Amy knew the woman for the wife of one F. Marshall Styles, whose ability for making money was equaled only by his wife's ability to climb. She perceived that Mrs. Styles looked upon Vawtry as an acquisition, and was glad to show favor to his friends, and that her confidence in his judgment, already large, was greatly strengthened by the result of her rapid inventory of Amy's dress.

"Mrs. Styles is in great distress of mind," Vawtry said to Amy lightly. "Her carriage is hopelessly blockaded and her footman has just arrived, breathless, to beg her patience."

Amy responded with amused sympathy and the three chatted until Vawtry slipped away, leaving the two women together.

"Your carriage is ready," he said to Amy when he returned. Then he turned to Mrs. Styles. "I have further questioned your man," he said. "I find he is really hopeless of getting

here before it is quite dark. Shall I try to find some sort of a vehicle for you? Even that will take time, in this frightful matinee crush."

He glanced casually at Amy as he spoke. She responded instantly, without volition. It was not till she was home, waiting for Kilvert and their dreaded dinner together that she realized she must have done precisely what Vawtry had willed her to do when he brought into such juxtaposition the facts of her victoria's readiness and Mrs. Styles's predicament. For she had turned to that lady quickly. "Let me take you in," she had said. "We may live near each other. Even if we do not, I have all the time in the world."

But it was not until she was sitting across from Kilvert, trying to make some sort of talk to save them in their servants' eyes, that it occurred to her to wonder if Mrs. Styles had not done the thing which Vawtry desired in asking her carriage hostess to come to tea the following Tuesday, both of them having, during their drive, professed the utmost weariness of those conventions which the world in general literally observes. She decided, while she questioned Kilvert absently about his day, that, even though she had promised to come, her acceptance after all would depend on whether Mrs. Styles chose to observe those conventions which they both had derided.

She followed Kilvert into the library when they rose from the dinner-table and tossed over some new magazine lying on the table. It seemed to her almost time to take up a part of the burden again, that acting which she had begun not a month before, and which had ended so disastrously with her breakdown of a fortnight back. She dropped into a great, leather-covered chair and watched Kilvert as he untied a package of books which were lying on a side-table. He brought them over to her.

"I brought up Rhodes's new book tonight," he said. "You may like to read it. The critics are warmer than usual."

Amy took the book and turned

its pages. Kilvert's thoughtfulness touched her, and yet maddened her. If only she might feel that for some space of time she were out of his mind as if she never had been in it! Yet she thanked him and read him bits here and there of bright dialogue or breezy comment. Kilvert dropped into a chair across from her while she read and scanned her face thoughtfully.

"You are so pale," he said abruptly. "You should be getting out more, Amy. I dare say you have been cooped up all day today, as usual."

Amy closed the book and laid it aside. "I went out this afternoon," she said quickly. What if she should tell him now, of this afternoon and of that sickening night! She felt again that strange impulse to confession, not for anyone's sake but hers, anyone's comfort but her own. Then she cast the impulse from her in terror and rose to her feet. She was afraid of that warm, rich room, of herself, and, most of all, of those keen eyes which, when last she had seen them, were bent on her. She glanced at Kilvert now and found he was looking at her yet. No, she could never tell him, never. She was a coward, perhaps, but she could never tell him. The coincidences were too oddly coincident with the story.

"I went to 'Carmen,'" she added hastily. "I tried to catch Gerry, for company, and she wasn't at home, so I went alone. It has tired me more than I thought, so I think I shall go upstairs. Yes, I'll try to get out a little more now, Evan. Good night."

She went away from him, calling herself a weak and feeble thing, to be so enthralled by Vawtry's eyes, so filled with fear by Kilvert's. She sneered at herself as she remembered how she had obeyed the undoubted desire that Vawtry's eyes held that afternoon, had done the thing he willed her to do. This woman, Mrs. Styles, was not her sort of woman at all. She had been a fool to promise to go to that tea, especially when a child would know Vawtry would be there. Well, she would have reason enough for not keeping that foolish promise—convention was worth

all it cost, sometimes. Mrs. Styles had no right to ask her.

She was away from home the next afternoon. A single card awaited her on her return. It bore the engraved name of Mrs. F. Marshall Styles. She read it with a faint smile, and tossed it from her.

"Kismet!" she said wearily.

## XII

VAWTRY stood upon the sidewalk until Amy's victoria had disappeared in the crush of carriages. Then he lighted a cigar, because he felt the need of its soothing effect, and glanced up and down. He finally decided on his uptown apartment, and on a walk thereto.

He was in very truth entirely innocent of any conniving at that meeting of the afternoon. He was still acutely conscious that he might have prevented more than passing greetings and farewells, but his gladness was keen that the meeting had been precisely what it was. Although Amy had not by word or intentional glance given him any ground for hope that she still loved him, much less that she was at all ready to listen to any tale of love from him, nevertheless he, who knew her so well, had beheld her moved almost beyond her powers of self-control. And whether it were hate or love that stirred her so deeply, he did not care, just now. It was enough that he provoked so deep an emotion, whatever its extreme.

He walked swiftly along the Avenue, his pulses tingling and his eyes alight. He ascended the porticoed entrance to the bachelors' apartment building where he had his suite of rooms, and he let himself quickly in. His man came to take his outdoor things, and he flung them off and motioned him away. The walk had not calmed him, he discovered.

He went into his dimly lighted, beautifully furnished sitting-room, and flung himself along a broad couch that filled one wall space. As he swept his

eyes about the room, a bitter smile came to his lips. For memory rose before him of his two small rooms of two years back, when he loved Amy, and she loved him, and they both were free as birds of the air. If he had had all this then, how different their stories now.

He did not often think of his dead wife, and never with tenderness; but tonight he remembered her with scorn and detestation. He had been her money debtor to the extent of thousands of dollars before she had deliberately forced the issue. As he had told Amy in his letter after his marriage, there had really been nothing else for him to do—since the lady was ready with her solution—unless, indeed, he cared to look ruin bravely in the face, a thing which no one would suspect Bertie Vawtry of doing.

For Vawtry was a pure and perfect cross-section of dilettantism. He knew the faddish artists of his day, and his Omar Khayyam. He sang well, and he could play all the Wagner motifs. He had the argot and the patois of all the studios. He had taken hold of that wild venture of his, that ephemeral magazine which had proved his life's undoing, with ardent delight. He had always longed for the life artistic, and he himself did too many things by halves to do anything well. Editing an artistic and literary periodical seemed to his fancy just the sort of thing he was made for by the gods of this world.

Amy Crawford had come into his life just as that iridescent dream was well under way, and their first meeting had been electrical. And later, when the dream of his mad venture was losing its glowing colors and becoming a dun and sordid thing, this other woman, this dead Eugenia, swept across his orbit, with her plain figure and plainer face, and her vanities and sillinesses, and her astounding wealth.

Vawtry shivered in the warm room. Thank God, it was ended, the hideous deceits and more hideous revealings that came at times when his endurance failed him, and her vanity and jealous

fears flamed into open fury. Her too evident ten years' seniority, his ardent youth, and the natural wonder and smiles of chance strangers, together with his own irresistible impulses to snatch sips of honey for his solace when he might, all this was too much for the preserving of the infatuated woman's uncertain temper. And yet, even with almost two years of hell and its torments, he might still have missed all this luxury—if she had not died when she did.

Vawtry's lips curved into an irrepressible smile as he glanced about the rich room. His sense of humor was keen, and he had never forgotten his emotions, when, almost immediately following the hour of his wife's death, he discovered that the checkmate she had planned for him was defeated by Death itself. To be sure, with her estate left intestate, he had come in for only his legal share, but that share was ample for a life of luxury. He had soothed the first few months of his widowhood by picking up all through the Orient rugs and curios, in contemplation of just such an apartment as this—and behold the net result of his first magazine venture! It was not so bad, and the two wasted years out of his twenties would be forgotten when he reached his forties.

He pulled himself up from his couch, and went over to the library-table, a wonderful piece of carved teakwood. A paper was lying there, a *Tattler* of several weeks back. He picked it up musingly. It contained Amy's story. If Amy had not sent him that story, one of his several holds on her would be wanting now. "The Good Man!"

He thought seriously of another potential hold on her he had put in operation that afternoon. He could not always rely on Fate, kind as the jade had been this last fortnight. There must be some common stamping-ground—he had been thinking of that all through the opera, and in the foyer he had run on Mrs. Styles, eager, opulent, a climber of sorts, who would do all things for him in return for what *The Tattler* might do, if it willed, for



her. She was a clever woman, this dashing creature, and one word had been sufficient. It only remained now, for him to lie in waiting, to be patient. Even now he was deliberately planning nothing definite—but he was mad with love of her—Amy, the only woman he had ever loved with a love that lasted a scant six months. That she was out of his reach now only made her the more desirable, the more desired.

He rang for his man. "Dinner in half an hour, Reynolds," he said, "with a trial of the champagne that came today. That last consignment must go back."

He settled into his lounging-chair, and picked up the back number of his paper again. That story of Amy's which he had printed and paid her for at double rates fascinated him. He had wondered at the time if it were a message to him, and he had waited, after his manner, for further enlightenment before he moved in her direction. The night at that French café had settled that question beyond a doubt. She had sent it innocently enough, which fact only added to the interest it held for him. With every re-reading he found new confessions lurking in lines and between lines.

He read it through once again. Then he laid it aside, and lighted a cigarette, and laughed.

"'The Good Man!'" he murmured.

The smile still lingered on his lips when Reynolds stepped into the room, half an hour later, announcing dinner.

### XIII

WHILE she waited she wondered, almost impersonally, how it had come about that she was here, ready for her journey, half an hour ahead of time. What other event had she not delayed by at least so much time! Even for her wedding she had been exactly one hour late. Something had been utterly wrong with the lacing of her stays, and that frightful fact had not been discovered until her princess

wedding dress was all but laced together.

She shrugged her shoulders a little impatiently. She hardly knew why she was thinking now of all that delay unless it was that, all day long, she had been running across odd reminders of the day when she took Evan Kilvert's name, the name he was so insistent on her guarding as a treasure of great price. She wondered with a smile what he would say tonight when he came home and found her note.

She had gone over the house that morning, after a small steamer-trunk had been hastily packed and sent away, from room to room, lightly, almost casually; feeling like a disembodied spirit looking upon the scenes of past revels and conflicts. From pantry to attic she had gone, avoiding the servants when she could, meeting their curious eyes with cool blankness when she could not. It was seldom now that she made the grand tour of her house. She did not blame them for their curiosity.

She had heard the clock strike the noon hour as she came down from the third story. It occurred to her then, with really interesting impersonality, that two o'clock was the hour. It hardly seemed that she herself had any part in the small matter of departure set for them.

She had gone, however, directly into her bedroom, and she looked about it, until its rosy colors danced before her eyes. She had gone up to a drawing hanging against a wall, a self-caricature of a famous caricaturist, whom she had known long years before his name and fame came to him. She had always liked that bit of work, and had always taken it with her everywhere. She had forgotten that she was leaving it behind. She put up her hands to lift it down, and then she had remembered that Evan liked it, too, that Evan could stand before it and chuckle by the half-hour. Well, if he liked it, let him have it! She wished now that the thought of his pleasure in it had preceded instead of followed her cool reflection that she had really

no place for it, since her steamer-trunk was gone.

She had turned from the picture and had gone over to her wardrobe closet. She knew what was hanging there, for she had had to make rigid selection only that morning. After having had so much, it was hard to select the few needful things which must go within the narrow confines of a steamer-trunk. She looked regretfully at a black lace dress and a rosy chiffon one; how unfortunate that she could not possibly take them with her!

And so, after many wanderings, she found herself in Kilvert's bedroom. She had unlocked the communicating door; it had been locked for many, many weeks. She found herself wondering what he would say when he came home and read that letter. But why should she worry about his caring? What sort of man would let a wife drift so far away—if he cared? The answer had come sharply; she had winced under it, as she was wincing now, that it was not because he could not, but because he would not master her. At first his withdrawal had been the consideration born of a love too mighty for her to reach up to. Of late she had felt it to be the calm ignoring born of deep disgust.

She had looked about the room curiously, almost as if she had never seen it before. She had straightened a brush here, a chair there. For one brief minute she stood beside his bed. She wondered how he was to pass the coming night, whether he would sleep—or care!

Then, because she had felt that oddly impersonal standpoint breaking up within her she had gone hurriedly from the room, and, without noticing the time, had slipped into her outdoor things and had snatched up her gloves and handbag and umbrella and had gone downstairs. In the hall she hesitated for a second. She had intended to call a cab. But she found sudden fear enveloping her, a curious fear, the same fear that had sent her stumbling up the stairs that dreadful night, now three months back, looking fearfully

over her shoulder, in dread of some hideous thing seizing on her from behind. She would have to go to that dreadful telephone-room, and she would certainly see Kilvert standing again in the doorway, as he had stood and looked at her that night. Even now he might be coming, might see her with this telltale bag; and if he should come on her she would have no lie ready for him. She had tried to say to herself with bravado that he might come and welcome, that she would gladly give him the truth; but even at the time she had known that she was lying to herself. She could not tell some truths to that man; it was easier to lie to him, and to lie to him was the hardest task she had ever set herself.

And so it was that she had come here so far ahead of time, because she had fled in terror, driven out by a formless fear that Kilvert might come home and find her there.

She looked about the station. There was the usual crowd of restless humanity, fretful women and crying children and inconsiderate men. She had withdrawn from them all as far as she could, because she hated crowds and jostlings. Already she had, too, a curious feeling that she was indeed a thing apart from them—the women about her, girls and matrons and mothers alike.

Rather near her a woman was sitting, one of the type to whom the fact of maternity is a leveler of all castes and creeds and conventions. She was, doubtless, under normal conditions, a modest woman. Amy watched her as she brightly and unblushingly raised her baby to her bared breast. Amy's lips curled in a sneer of sheer disgust, and a moment later, watching the same woman bend adoringly over the red, ugly child she was nursing, her eyes filled with hot, unreasoning tears. She had never cared for motherhood. She had always felt honest pity for those women whose best years had to be wasted in the care of their young. She was intensely glad today that she was free from any such responsibility. But she suddenly realized, as she had never realized before, the

anchor that two groping baby hands might be.

Her mind went back to Kilvert. All the time she had been watching that mother and her child she had been thinking of him. How intensely he cared for children! She thought his fondness for them foolish and odd, but it was of a quality at which she could never even pretend to sneer. In fact, the fineness of its quality shamed her, who had none of it. She remembered now a talk of theirs before their marriage, when some such simple scene as this one had crossed their sight. She had seen then, for the first time, that almost maternal love of his for children, and the sight had made her fretful and dissatisfied and uncertain.

"I am not like that," she had said at last. "I was never intended by nature to be a mother. I am honestly afraid of children, in all ways."

She seemed to feel again the cool, fleeting touch of his hand on hers.

"You have never found out what you were intended for, Amy," he had said gently. "Nature has wonderful ways of teaching when she is allowed to work unthwarted."

It was all he had ever said to her, but she had never forgotten it. In spite of herself she wondered how it would be with her today if, instead of leaving Evan Kilvert's home, she were nested within it, guarded as tenderly as if she were the one woman in the world to whom annunciation had ever come. How he longed for fatherhood!

Well, thank God, there was no child! She had given marriage a fair trial, and it had proved the worst one of her many mistakes. Now she was to make her last throw, snatch once again after a happiness snatched away two years and more before. She could not doubt Vawtry's reckless devotion for her, nor hers for him. For three endless months, ever since their first meeting after separation, she had tried to be good and had had to lie and lie about it all, and be virtually called a liar for all her pains. She could not think yet of that telephone-room scene with Kilvert without purple

flushes of shame and anger and torment.

She had not meant to see Vawtry ever again after that first meeting. And the first time she ventured out, after two weeks, he and she had been thrown together at the opera. It had been fate which had decided her life always—fate which had thrown her into Kilvert's arms and fate which was casting her now into Vawtry's.

She had struggled hard to break the spell Vawtry had cast over her. She had not been eager for Mrs. Styles's friendship, whose home had been Vawtry's skilfully manipulated battlefield. She had left the continuance of that thing to chance, and something—fate again—had inspired Mrs. Styles to leave that conventional calling-card. And since her first acceptance of that opulent lady's generous hospitality she had felt the subtle flattery of warm admiration and liking on Mrs. Styles's part.

For two months she had been meeting Vawtry constantly at the Styleses' home. They were flashy people. She felt instant and innate superiority to them, but they were kindly and generous and liberal in their views to the point of having no views. With finished tact Vawtry stayed in the far background until a certain intimacy was firmly established. That once settled he steadily advanced himself through the middle to the foreground, and, after a night or two of struggle and doubt, it became clear to her that, if she stopped going to the Styleses' home now there would be gossip and association of her name with Vawtry's as the cause thereof, which would be far worse than the enduring of his company when he thrust it upon her. Sometimes a woman is given the reasonings of Satan and all the devils.

She hardly knew how she had come at last to the far-reaching decision on which she was acting today, yet it had all come naturally enough. For a week the vital question had hung heavy in the air; Vawtry was pressing hard for his answer before he asked it. Only the afternoon before, in Mrs. Styles's

music-room, he had put it into words. Long before the week began Amy would have been unable to put him from her. His waiting but made victory surer.

Both he and she had reasoned that their love made all things right. The divorce that Kilvert would obtain later would put things conventionally right, Vawtry told her. Amy stopped him there.

"I shall never be married again," she had told him. "I should hate you within three days if I bore your name legally."

Vawtry had let it pass without argument. After all, that phase of the question mattered little. What mattered was that he should gain immediate possession of this woman he loved. He pressed other questions on her. They would go West for their belated honeymoon. When they returned they would have an apartment which would be a hospitable refuge for people of broad culture and broader morals; there would be nothing unpleasant for her to face from anyone, ever. Even after the divorce, if she did not choose to have the legal ceremony read, her courtesy title of Mrs. Vawtry would do for everyone. He had arranged all things.

Yet today she wondered how she had come, after all, to consent. Certainly there had been no domestic crisis to precipitate such decision. She and Kilvert, indeed, had passed an unusually pleasant evening together only the night before. One of his friends who had dramatic ambitions had handed Kilvert a copy of a play for his judgment. Kilvert brought it home with him, and at dinner gave it to her. She had begun to read it immediately, and she caught a particularly clever thing on the fifth page and passed it over to Kilvert. It had ended in her reading the play aloud to him that night and in a long series of joint criticisms, which Kilvert jotted down in his fine, precise hand for the young playwright's benefit. She was glad to think of that peaceful an ending to it all; it was so much better, so much

more inevitable in its very seeming than if her departure had come swift upon some sharp scene. This thing spelled Finality.

Shrill crying near her roused her at last. She looked up, almost bewildered. The woman with her nursing baby was gone. A fat Irishwoman, with twins, had taken her place. They were lap babies still, and both of them were crying. Amy watched with interest this woman's astonishing manoeuvres, which made her two arms do the full work of six. She became lost in the sleight-of-hand which the nursing of twins involved. The woman seemed altogether just and impartial, too, and the babies were openly ugly, and her love for them was a strange but patent thing.

Amy moved her slender limbs restlessly. She swept the waiting-room with her eye. She seemed to meet answering gazes from many. She knew her dress was as unobtrusive as a simple brown tailored suit could be, but she had been there a long time—she had forgotten all about time. She glanced up at a clock. Surely it was high time for Bertie to have come.

For a few scant seconds she stood upright, brought to her feet through sheer bewilderment. She sat down again and stared straight ahead of her. Their train left at two o'clock, and it was now ten minutes past the hour. The train had gone—without them. Gone! She looked about her once in sudden terror. Had she mistaken the meeting-place? How foolish of her; there was no mistake of that sort possible. Bertie Vawtry simply had not come.

She looked about her again. Thank heaven, she met no curious eyes now! She closed hers against the hideous room, against the shame which rose and beat and buffeted her. What should she do—what should she do! For the time being she took no reckoning of unavoidable delays. Bertie Vawtry simply had not come.

In dreams one may live through a lifetime in seconds. In those three minutes through which Amy Kilvert



lay against her straight-back seat with closed eyes, and a face over which the crimson blood poured in surges, it was given to her to see the scrolls of three souls unroll before her; not hers alone, but Evan Kilvert's and Bertie Vawtry's. She saw and read the record of each one. She looked upon her own infinitely lower than one, somewhat higher—thank heaven—than the other!

When she rose again to her feet she caught at the back of her seat to steady herself. She glanced again shudderingly at the clock. It was thirteen minutes past two—the lifetime she had lived in those three minutes just added to Time Past! She looked furtively about her, in terror lest she should catch sight of Vawtry hastening toward her from some part of the room. At first she had not thought of anything except that he had not come, deliberately had not come. Now she remembered with a rush the countless things that might have held him, all legitimate delays, and she was terrified at the thought that he might even then be rushing across the street to her. The memory of all those countless things bewildered her. She did not know what she thought the explanation was—unavoidable detention or inexcusable carelessness or deliberate failure to come. It might be any or all of these things—she did not care. All that she knew was that she could never go away with him, so long as she lived, for she had just seen his hidden soul, and it was small and black and hideous, and he loved it and it alone—as she loved hers and hers only.

She decided to go out by a small, not generally used door. She found herself at last on the street, still cold with fear lest she should meet him. When she came to a drug-store she went into it, and bought some paper and envelopes, and wrote a letter. As she wrote, she felt a strong temptation to be honest, nakedly honest, for the sake of that shrunken spirit of hers which she had just beheld; and then the temptation to do one really good act—which, in this instance, discounted hon-

esty and lay far apart from it—overcame her, and she wrote a few keen, sneering lines to Vawtry, refusing to go away with him; such notice appearing to be her final touch to a deep, dark plot dating from some two years and three months back. She called a messenger and sent it to his rooms. Then she rose, decided on her next step.

So far as outward matters went, she could easily go back to Kilvert's home. In spite of that foolish fear which made her flee so hurriedly two brief hours before, there was not one chance in ten thousand that he had come home in the middle of the day. She could guard against running into any such ten thousandth chance by telephoning James, and then, when he told her, as he would, that certainly Mr. Kilvert had not come home, she could order him to withhold that note. Half an hour later she could hold it in her hand. There was really not a chance against her chance to sit that night at Evan Kilvert's table, his wife.

But she set her lips tight as all this thronged her mind. She could never get away from those three revealing moments. She could never go back to him without confession—and such confession—that she had not run away with another man because for the second time he had failed her, had not come! She had not done the deed, but she had willed it as she had never willed anything in all her life. To all intent she had sinned the sin. What man would take her back, especially when he knew, as Kilvert would know, the sordid impulses which alone would bring her! Since she could not go without confession, she could not go back.

She was planning to go to a hotel for the night, to send for her trunk from the station, and to look for a boarding-place the next day. She decided to go far downtown, and she hailed a passing car. She found herself scanning its occupants with that same fear of meeting Vawtry which had held her ever since she went swiftly away from the station. She sat down near the door, holding her handbag, the beautiful one she had

bought before her marriage and paid for after it, from Kilvert's pocket. He had never known of that instance, nor of the many, many bills she had settled so. In this moment she perceived that his ignorance or knowledge mattered not a whit. She had done the deeds. Her sordid, sordid, sordid soul!

She heard the conductor call a cross street, and the sound brought back a flood of odd memory. Five years before she had lived for a few months on this street—the picture of that old-fashioned room she had slept in came back to her. It had spelled peace to her then—she could not remember why she had ever left the place.

At the next street she got off and walked back. She had a sudden fancy to try for it at least, that same quaint room. She was sick of people. She would drop out of their lives. She would begin again to live her own—she would have to. Her money would not hold out long.

She found the same old lady in the same old house, with the same old room at her disposal. She hesitated a second in giving her name when she sent for her trunk. She had decided impulsively on her mother's maiden name as her own now, and the old lady, knowing her once as Amy Crawford, was calling her Mrs. Garland. She wondered if Vawtry—granted he had come at last—would think of tracing her by her trunk, and then she laughed. If the gods willed it, let him trace her down just once again, if he were so minded.

But the next two hours were dreadful things. At any moment in them she was safe in going back to Kilvert's luxurious home, back to her rose-pink room, back to wealth and ease and careless plenty. Terror of the future swept her time and again. She hardly knew what she would do for money after the few hundreds she had with her were gone. It would be so easy to walk serenely into that home, pick up that damning letter lying on the hall table waiting for Kilvert and tear it into bits, even burn those bits to

make assurance doubly sure. There was no need for Kilvert to know—he had never heard Vawtry's name—he would think her a madwoman were she to try to confess to him about an unknown man. Even if she could not go back without confession then—how curiously she clung to that feeling!—then why not confess? Men liked confessions, grovelings—Kilvert himself had been waiting for them for months—he would get all and more than he had ever bargained for. She wavered time and again. Even after her trunk came, at seven o'clock, she looked at it in miserable indecision. Sometimes he could not come home to dinner—she knew he had a heavy case on now—even now she might go home and find all things easy for her.

But she did not go, she did not go. Temptation in its subtlest guises assailed her time and again. She was shown how she might make even her confessions alluring to her husband—the very thought of making them to him became alluring to her. But she did not go.

She undressed early, and went to bed, too worn and weary to sit or stand any longer. Once she felt a sort of stupor creeping over her, and she resigned herself to it longingly. How long it held her she did not know. But she roused from it at last, to find herself sitting upright in her bed. What awful terrors had shaken her? She lighted her gas with shaking fingers, and opened her pocket-book desperately. She counted its contents, and gasped with fear. She had something over twenty dollars there, which, it seemed, left as it was from her regular allowance, she might use. But the five one-hundred-dollar bills which Kilvert had given her only two days before to pay an excess dressmaker's bill, and which, without once thinking of ethics, she had brought with her when she left his house, these, it seemed, from this vision—dream—nightmare—which had just shaken and wakened her, she must not use. She knew it with the same moral clearness with which

she had seen that afternoon that, without confession, she could not go back. There was no reason to her, she told herself, trying to reason things out to her advantage. But, if she was not to use that sum, there remained then but one thing for her to do—it was hardly more than ten o'clock, she discovered—she could at least dress and go down somewhere to telephone James—even yet there was the chance that Kilvert was not home—there was still that chance for her.

She was hastily twisting up her hair, when she stopped, shocked into stillness. She had forgotten. She was forever too late. *She could not go back.* For she must confess—reason or no reason, she was powerless against that settled thing—she must confess. And confession would not save her. He would know so well that it was not love which brought her back, but merely coarse, material longings for those material things she had too hastily thrown up. What man would ever let her pass beyond his outer hall, knowing that?

She lay down upon her bed again, wide-eyed and sleepless, but quiet and still. The struggle was ended, but she waited. Not until she heard the midnight hour strike through the silent house did she turn restlessly upon her narrow bed, suddenly relaxed and nerveless.

"Even if he did not come home to dinner tonight," she whispered wearily, "he has read it now. He was never later than twelve o'clock."

She did not know then or ever that Vawtry, angry and flurried, reached the station just ten minutes after she left it. His tardiness was a combination of carelessness and inevitable circumstance. He did not find her, and some instinct drove him directly to his rooms, where he found her note awaiting him. The paper was not her usual monogrammed variety, and its time of arrival was late indeed; but Vawtry, raging and baffled, did not stop to think of trifles. He felt absolutely certain that, with this ridicu-

lous ending to a grave matter, he had lost her forever. The realization maddened him to such excess of pain and fury as would perhaps have comforted her could she but have looked upon it.

At six o'clock he left, alone, on one of his two tickets, for the West. In spite of his extravagances there was always about Vawtry a certain admirable thrift.

#### XIV

It was close on midnight indeed when Kilvert came home that night. He had telephoned word of his detention for the evening, and had learned of James that Mrs. Kilvert was not in. He found the man waiting for him when he came at last, and he took the note James handed to him, recognizing, with a curious foreboding, Amy's bold, beautiful script.

"Mrs. Kilvert has not come in yet, sir," remarked James incidentally.

"This is all, James," said Kilvert quietly. "You may go to bed."

He waited till he heard the door at the rear of the hall close. Then he went into the library and tore open the envelope with a hand that shook.

He read the letter slowly. Then he let it fall upon the table and sat staring at it. His face had gone white and his jaw was rigid. Otherwise he seemed unmoved.

An hour went by before he picked it up again and read it slowly over. It was during that hour that Amy, worn and beaten, had sunk to deadened slumber. Sentences flashed up at him, some of them as if they had been written in red ink.

I am going to leave you. There is no use in trying to make it go any longer. Besides, the Other Man has come back. I meant never to see him again, but we met by purest accident that night three months ago, when I came home at two. I hated him that night. But I met him again without meaning to—we had seats together at an opera matinee—I swear it was not planned. I've lied to you before, but every word I write down here is truth. I met a friend of his that afternoon, Mrs. F. Marshall Styles. I've been there often since. At first he didn't come there so much, and then he was there all the time. Yesterday

afternoon we decided it. He married another woman for the same reason that I married you. Now she is dead and he has her money. I always loved him and I never loved you, although I don't mind telling you this, that I shall never honor him, and I shall never cease to honor you—in spite of myself. If I were worth anything at all I would spare your honor and your name. But I am driven to it. Forget me when you can. Divorce me when you will. Divorce will make no difference to me, for I shall never have a marriage service read over me again; but for your sake, put me from you as soon as you can. Go to Gerry; she knows all the past story—mine and his—that I haven't time to write out. He is Bertie Vawtry; he is editor of *The Tatler*, Evan. He accepted "The Good Man!" I didn't know he was in America when I sent it in. It is fate, I tell you—fate! I would never have sent it to him, never have had it printed anywhere, if I had known he was here. But he knew it all from reading that—all the unhappiness of my marriage. I might have made my pride win out, if that defense had not been down. But he knew too much from that. We are going West at two o'clock, for weeks. I am everything you think me. Good-bye.

Vawtry—Vawtry! Kilvert rose in sudden fury. That odd, distinctive name! The very name his woman client of a year back bore, who wrote him from abroad of the divorce she wanted from her husband—non-support, that was her charge. This cad—he had his minutest history from the woman who knew him best, given with all the detail of a vain and jealous wife some years her husband's senior. Kilvert recalled now that one of the first letters he opened after he and Amy came back from their wedding trip was a letter from Vienna announcing her death and presenting, through her husband's lawyers, his claims on her intestate estate. The grim humor of it had struck him at the time. He even remembered that he had told Amy of it, though he recalled that he had mentioned no names. He was invariably cautious in such wise. He had had nothing more to do with the matter after that, and the final adjustment had passed into the hands of another member of the firm.

But he knew the man. He had no need to go to Gerry. He knew the man. All the letters of that dead woman—he had them all—foolish con-

fidences poured out incoherently to her lawyer as she might have put them before her favorite physician. She had gone into every detail in every direction; she had a mania for minutiae, this dead Eugenia Vawtry. He knew the man! And with such a man Amy had deliberately chosen to go away!

Then it was that the iron struck his soul and entered it; she was with him, had been with him for almost twelve hours; she was with him tonight, regardless of honor, of self-respect. She had fled deliberately from her husband's home, had written in cold blood this morning of her intention; had known of it last night, even while they sat together here, she in that dark leather chair across yonder, slender and exquisite and glowing in her flame-like dress, reading that play of Cosburn's to him; they had not had such an evening together in weeks. He had even bent, as she went away from him, and had kissed her warmly on the lips; it was the last time he had seen her, touched her.

Kilvert dropped into his chair with a groan. Anger rose and tore him; his pride rended him; his insulted love choked and strangled him. But against his will he pitied her, for her mad reachings after happiness and for the apples of Sodom which she had clutched instead.

When morning came, and he heard the servants stirring, he went upstairs unseen, and took his morning bath. When he came down to breakfast he spoke to Maggie gravely:

"Mrs. Kilvert will not be back for some time, Maggie."

"There was a steamer-trunk went yesterday morning, sir, to the Grand Central Station," said Maggie the faithful one, trouble writ large across her brow. "But seeing as Mrs. Kilvert said nothing to any of the household, sir, I didn't know."

"Yes," said Kilvert. He turned back to her as he went into the dining-room.

"Mrs. Kilvert has a good many effects, Maggie, which she will not wish disturbed. I shall lock her



rooms myself, and no one need enter them till her return."

"Yes, sir," said Maggie, the trouble in her eyes not dying. Kilvert's servants were old family treasures, and adored him. Amy had her admirers too, belowstairs, mingled though they were with her detractors, but Kilvert's praises were one continuous pæan.

Before going downtown, Kilvert went back upstairs. He went first to Amy's den, where her old desk and typewriter stood, battered remnants of her busy days. He glanced about the small room, and then shut the door and locked it, and took the key with him. He crossed the hall then to her room, and stood for a second outside the door before he opened it. Stinging memories came to him of the many times, when, with her within, he had paused here, only to pass by. Had he been the one primarily at fault in this thing, in that he had failed to exercise the mastery a woman in spite of herself demands of a man! He opened the door and stepped inside—the beautiful room which she had so adorned, so made alive! He went over to a window which was slightly raised, and closed it. Then he glanced about him. Through the half-opened door of her wardrobe closet he saw many of her dresses hanging. The flaming color of the gown she had worn when last he saw her seemed to flash out at him, and strike him across the eyes. He went swiftly over and shut the door. Her dressing-gown lay across the foot of her bed. Her dressing-table was strewn with many silver trifles—surely she had not taken much with her—one steamer-trunk, Maggie had said. That would not hold much.

He set his teeth at the thought of Maggie—his half-lie to her. He would have to meet constantly now the need for equivocations or stubborn silences. He would say nothing, but by and bye the truth would creep about, through the servants first, and then from servant to master here and there until his little world would know the shameful, naked truth. When the questions

about her return stopped then he would know, and not till then, that the truth was circulating busily. The shame of it—the shameful shame, for him and her! He wished one thing passionately as he stood there—that she was a girl of tender years, still in her teens, young enough to be held not altogether responsible for her act. For an erring child-wife there was full excuse to beat the tempter with whips, to slay him, even. But to add that item to this history, with Amy the woman she was, who had made her successful way alone for many years—the world would laugh at him for a fool, and rightly. Worst of all, he would laugh at himself. This was a case where a woman deliberately chose her path, even when it led straight to dishonor. There were many, knowing her and the outlines of her history, who would say the temptress had been she, the victim Vawtry.

Kilvert found himself cursing aloud. The bitter, eating shame of it! The bitter shame! He went from the empty room without a glance behind him, and shut and locked the door that led into his room—locked it upon all traces of her living presence, her laden dressing-table, the crimson dressing-gown lying across her bed, holding still the curves of that slender body which for a day and a night had belonged of her free will to another man. He put the three keys into his bedroom safe. It was months before he stepped within those rooms again, to find the dust lying heavy over everything, and all the silver trinkets tarnished and black from long exposure and lack of care.

He went downtown that day and the next day and the next. He came home that night and the next night and the next. All day he worked. All evening he sat in his library, battling with his anger, his pride, his love, his aching pity. He went to bed sleepless, and he woke from troubled slumber unrefreshed. So the first week passed, and the first month, and the second and the third.

It was at the beginning of the fourth

month of his desertion and loneliness that his boy brought him, one afternoon, a lady's card. Kilvert took it carelessly, and read its inscription. It was Germaine Taft's.

He hesitated a moment. No one of Amy's old friends had written him or seen him to inquire about her absence. He had indeed been mercifully spared embarrassment. The servants had told callers that Mrs. Kilvert was out of town, and no other explanations had been insisted on. Once or twice he had wondered over the silence of all those women friends of her girlhood, and had explained it with the bitter reasoning that she had doubtless been pleased to make formal recognition of this second change in her life quite as punctiliously as when she sent out announcement cards of the Kilvert-Crawford nuptials. But of it all he really knew nothing. He did not know whether Vawtry—and Amy—were in or out of town; whether he still owned *The Tattler*, which still appeared regularly on Saturday, or whether he had given up its management. He knew nothing—had made no attempt to find out anything. This card—he wondered what it boded. He did not wish to see Mrs. Taft, and yet he felt it was impossible to avoid it. He spoke at last curtly:

"Show the lady in."

He was standing by his desk when Germaine Taft came into his office. He caught her eyes first, and they held him. They were wide and deeply shadowed, and showed traces of recent tears. He felt her hand tremble greatly as he took it. Yet he did not feel afraid of hysteria in her. He had assurance that this woman, though she doubtless traveled at times the usual feminine roads to nerve relief, indulged in tears in secret and alone.

He drew a chair forward for her wordlessly. He saw she was trembling with eagerness.

"Mr. Kilvert," she said impetuously. "I have come to you this afternoon because I had to come—because I have just come from"—she hesitated a moment, and then went courageously

on—"from Bertie Vawtry. Ah!" she urged, as Kilvert turned from her with a repellent gesture, "let me tell you what he said—you must. She is not with him—she has left him—he told me so—he does not know where she is, and he has been back a month—a month. She left him after two months—he told me so himself—and he has not heard from her since. Ah! I knew she could not stay with him, could not endure him nor the shame of it."

She paused, hoping for response. Kilvert sat down beside his desk. He was turned half from her. All that she could see of his face was the stern set of his mouth and chin. She remembered the glint of fear in Amy's eyes on her wedding day, and she herself, who had never feared any man, understood at last how even she might fear Evan Kilvert.

"She wrote to me," she went quickly on—she did not dare let that pause lengthen, "the barest sort of a note, the morning she went away with him, telling me I should not see her again unless I sought her out, that she was giving up all things along with you. She had a horror of coming on this man unawares, and three months before she went away I went to her to tell her he was back in town. She promised me then not to meet him—I know she meant to keep that promise then—I can never think she sought him out deliberately. I did not know she had seen him at all. I cannot tell you how that note sickened me, sickened me."

"She did not seek him!" Kilvert's voice rang hoarsely out after a second's pause. "She met him accidentally, on her part at least. I am sure that is the truth."

He stopped. When he began to speak again his voice was his usual one, cool, courteous, deliberate.

"I am sure you mean all good things in coming to me with this thing. But I do assure you that the news you bring matters nothing. I happen to know much of the—man in question, enough to make me certain the liaison could not

endure. I knew too much of them both to hope it might. If it could have meant her real happiness, I could have wished it might last. The quick ending has not surprised me, and does not change the situation."

He stopped again. His fingers slipped along a ruler's shining edge.

"If she were a mere girl," he continued slowly, "there would be room for a certain sort of action. I have seen too much of the curious workings of the human heart not to feel my knowledge thereof almost a guilty one. There come temporary madnesses which no man, and certainly no woman, can ever explain, and which should not be laid too heavily at the doors of the obsessed ones. But she was a woman of twenty-eight, ripe and experienced years. What man, with the slight hold a few months of marriage could give him on such a woman, would have the right to say to her, 'You were not responsible. You are not capable of choosing. You do not know your own mind!' She *was* responsible. She *was* capable of deciding. She must have known her mind, so far as leaving her home went. That she found another mind to make up later in view of later conditions does not change the force of her first decision. That decision holds for her and for me. Neither of us could possibly wish it should not."

"But," cried Germaine Taft pitifully, "where is she? Where is she? His heartlessness broke me utterly this afternoon—I had just heard he was back, and went to him—I—and bore his devilish sneers long enough to get at what he could tell me—where is she?"

Kilvert's face changed slightly, but only momentarily. It settled into coldness again.

"I have no idea," he said. "And I can take no steps to find out."

Once again he stopped. He continued with visible effort.

"I was wrong, somewhat, in saying that the news you bring has not changed the situation. I am willing to tell you this: that, after her flight, I

discovered, oddly enough, that she had not drawn her full amount on deposit at her bank. Neither has she drawn on it since, but beginning with this month, I shall place, monthly, a sum to her credit there, which will insure her against need, with instructions to the bank to forward the same to her as soon as they are in possession of her address. If you wish me to add this instruction, that they notify you when they are in a position to forward letters to her, I shall be glad to do so. I hope this will be of comfort to you. You have been a good friend to her—to us both."

Germaine's lips trembled as she listened. She had come, expecting a stone, and she had received for Amy bread, literally, as soon as she wrote to draw on that account!

"You are too good," she said, rising quickly, because she felt her composure going. "I can never thank you enough—it is all anyone could ever ask of you—and more than any other man I know would grant, with conditions as they are. Please add that last—I must hear."

Her voice broke entirely, and she added no other word. She merely held out her slender, trembling hand, and Kilvert held it hard.

"I thank you many times for coming," he said quietly.

He went with her to the outer door. Then he went back to his private office, giving the boy a curt order to admit no one for an hour. He wrote out a cheque immediately, and inclosed it in a letter to Amy's bank. He laid it on a pile of letters ready for late mailing. Then he crossed his arms on his desk, and stared moodily ahead of him.

So she had left the cad—already. And he was in town again, with a back better fitted for a horsewhip's stinging lashes than any man in town. Why, why, could he not go down to *The Tatler* office and artistically lattice that cowardly cur until his whip hung in satisfying ribbons? Why could he not? The answer came too quickly. He held Amy too greatly

responsible. He could cheerfully horsewhip any man for seducing a child, but he would be a mirth-provoking fool to go after the man in this case. It was the woman who had dealt him the injury. He could not satisfy his honor here by flaying or by slaying Vawtry.

In an hour he lifted his embargo on his inner office, and until five o'clock saw persons of consequence and inconsequence. At six, in the warm light of a summer evening, he went home to meet James's comfortable impassivity, to a solitary dinner which palled in spite of the fact that it was a tiny gem of perfect ray, to a lonely library, and a lonelier evening, to a night of restless tossing and revival of pain. She was not with Vawtry—there was comfort in that. But comfort changed to stabbing pain when the thought came that Vawtry even did not know her whereabouts, that no one of those who had loved her knew where she was wandering, under what manner of roof she might be sleeping tonight.

The months went by, and as regularly as they passed Kilvert added to that bank account which was steadily growing, and was never drawn upon. The fear came to him at last that she was dead. Later a colder fear struck him, that he would never know that she lived or had died, and he found uncertainty to be the greatest grief of all.

## XV

THE outer door of a house in a miserable side street opened late one afternoon, and Amy Kilvert came slowly down its shabby steps. Her name on the rusty mail-box read "Amy Garland." Her resolve to drop out of her old life had held firm.

Her own appearance matched that of the street and of the house from which she emerged. It was not the house to which she had gone that day she fled from Kilvert and from Vawtry. It had been many months since

she could afford those prices, ridiculously cheap as they had sounded in her ears that afternoon. For six months she had been living here primarily because the room rental was nearer what she could pay, but more and more because she was safe here from chance recognition by anyone she had ever known. She was wearing the same brown cloth suit in which she had taken her double flight. The contents of that steamer-trunk had rendered service such as she had never dreamed so limited a wardrobe could be made to do. But its limit was almost reached now—as was her own.

Her vicissitudes had been many during this twelvemonth just passing and her distinct successes none. She had hardly counted, after all, on the hardships that lay before her, when she took her mother's maiden name and sunk her own known self into a new Unknown.

Because of her unshakable resolve to cut away all the old life, any old standby, a newspaper position, for instance, was out of the question. Isabel Blair and Elinor Darling were too familiar with the ins and outs of all the offices in town for her to think of being able to preserve her incognita even if her own acquaintance were not so wide and scattered. She felt sincerely that she would rather starve than meet any of them.

Her twenty dollars had melted like snow in June. The rest, the five hundred dollars, her Egyptian spoil from her house of bondage, she had thought to send back to Kilvert. She had it all sealed, in fact, when a terrible thought rushed over her, the memory of a Potter's Field to which she had once gone for her paper—another of her yellow-journal escapades. She had never been able to forget its grim horrors. She might die—it was altogether possible she might die—the thought of such an end after death turned her faint and sick. Then, even though she had decided to send the money back, she had shrunk before from reminding Kilvert that she was living. She would far



rather he should believe she had taken the money with her, as he must believe, when that unpaid bill came in again. She was past caring for the good or bad opinions of others now—all that mattered was what she could or could not do. In the end she went to a small savings bank devoted to storing up the pennies of the East Side poor, and deposited her hundreds with an absolutely firm and simple resolve to leave them there until she died.

She clung to her writing, preserving her incognita. She sold enough to keep her alive for a year, writing always against fearful odds. Sometimes the burden of her typewriter rental was almost more than she could compass—that dreadful three dollars a month. She longed for her old one with a longing greater than she longed for anything from her old life. That three dollars seemed so merciless a tribute to drop into the maw of a great corporation.

But she had never got ahead. Most of her work had to go to magazines and papers which paid on publication, and the small amounts were mortgaged long before they were received. Lately it had become almost difficult to manage the stamps for the number of things she was sending out, and which for a long month had been so relentlessly returned.

The pity of it was that, if she could only make herself consent to be recognized, there were a dozen editors who would take her work on the strength of her former reputation—this same work she was sending out so resolutely, and which was coming back so constantly. She had sold one story two weeks before which would bring her perhaps twenty-five dollars, a feature story for an entire Sunday page. But it had not appeared the day before, and that meant at least a dreary week of waiting and another week before the payment would be made. Its printing might easily be delayed for a month. And she was three weeks in arrears for her room rent, and she had left tonight a single unbroken dollar,

with eight stamps to buy on the bare chance of two stories being accepted quickly and paid for speedily.

She shivered as her feet touched the sloppy pavement. It was a chilly March day, raw and bleak. Her shoes were cheap things and had worn out quickly.

She went into a small shop where stamps were sold and bought the eight she needed. She dropped her envelopes into a mail-box and walked on aimlessly. She had been trying to work all day, but she had accomplished nothing save wanton waste of her low stock of paper. The thought of that useless waste weighed upon her heavily, so pressing had her necessities become. She thought faintly of the eighty-four cents she had in her pocket-book, all the money she had in the world; she had really grown accustomed to forgetting that five hundred dollars lying in the penny savings bank, with the accrued year's interest.

As she walked along she wondered if she dared write the Sunday editor who had accepted her feature story with a faint cordiality, to tell him she must have some of the money to keep her from starving. She had made some tea that noon and she had some biscuit in her room. She had thought she must manage dinner of some sort tonight, but the sight of the scanty change which the girl pushed across the counter terrified her and drove away the hunger she had felt. She must save every penny of that which she could save, until she knew whether she dared brave that editor's wrath by infringing against well-known editorial rules made for the young and guileless. The maddening thing was that she had infringed many times in the past unscathed with this same editor, and he had advanced her the money she demanded without a murmur. But that was when she was Amy Crawford, and known. She doubted much that Amy Garland, unknown, would receive such treatment.

She walked slowly along the dingy street until she emerged, almost without knowing it, upon one of the lesser

avenues. Daylight was holding longer these latter March days. She had almost two hours of freedom yet from that close, hateful room; two hours before she would be afraid to traverse those close-built, narrow streets which led back to it. She could not understand the fear she had of streets at night, when she used to be so unconcerned in sunshine, moonshine or midnight blackness. But fear she had, and of a terrible sort.

She came to a small park at last, blocks distant from her lodging-place, and she sat down gratefully. Her strength was small since those days began of insufficient nourishment and crushing anxiety. Already she realized that she had come too far, and that she must gather strength here, enough to carry her back.

She sank down upon a small park bench, her head thrown back against a tree behind her. Her breath came quick and fast. Part of the time her eyes were closed. More than one woman, passing hurriedly, cast a frightened glance at the pallid-faced woman, whose pallor was made more shockingly white by the long, dark lashes resting against her thin cheeks. Now and then, at some step alarmingly close, or at some children's shouts and cries, she would open her eyes. Her apathy began at last to alarm her, and she sat upright.

A vagrant paper blew suddenly against her skirts, wet and muddy from its scurry along the sloppy walks in the teeth of the March wind. She bent to pick it up and was frightened at the sudden rush of blood to her head and the dizziness resulting. She opened it quickly and began to read, not because she cared if all Europe were engulfed in a cataclysmic earthquake sweeping rapidly toward the Americas, but because she must do something to crush down this rising sickness and giddiness.

She read the headlines apathetically. A woman had been killed on one of the Elevated roads, and the guards were held by the police. A young girl of alleged social prominence had eloped

with her father's latest hired footman, and pictorial journalism rejoiced thereat. A persistent and brave individual had won his case against a powerful corporation—a name in the first paragraph of the story caught her eye—it preceded by five lines the name of the victorious party to the suit—Evan Kilvert's name, the lawyer who had wrung victory from almost certain defeat.

Time and again during this year she had found Evan Kilvert's name figuring in different ways in the papers, and always, as now, it had leaped at her from the page, striking her eyes like red-hot needles. Always it had told success for him. She read through this story. Kilvert had won his case, and with it thirty thousand dollars.

She dropped the paper, and watched the wind take it up and send it flying down the walk. She said it over to herself—thirty thousand dollars! She tried to think how much money it really was. She sat, conjuring all sorts of foolish things, merely to get the magnitude of it before her. But she could not compass it. It suddenly seemed to her that twenty dollars out of it might be a little fortune, enough to content anyone for a time.

She watched the paper, still flying and tumbling down the street outside. She remembered, when it was out of reach, that today she had forgotten, for the first time in all this year, to turn first of all to that page which held the divorce lists, to scan it hurriedly, shrinkingly, with dread. Every day she expected to see it—Kilvert *vs.* Kilvert! Why not? He had every cause.

She shivered as the wind came keener from the east. She was cold here, but she did not see how she could possibly begin that long walk back. If only she might ride—but she could not spare the fare, simply could not. She thought of what she might write the next day to that Sunday editor—he had been star reporter once with her on her first paper. She was sorely afraid he might return the story instead of sending her the money for it. Well, suppose he

did! She might as well have the story now as the money in two weeks, when she was dead.

Her mind went back to the thought of Kilvert—her thoughts had not really left him since she had read that wind-blown sheet. She could see how he would come home tonight, with his step alert and firm, and a little more rapid than usual. His head would be high, and his nostrils would be slightly dilated. It would be his eyes, however, which would hold the story of his victory; those keen, steady, kindly eyes, that never swerved from any other eyes on earth, because there was no need, ever, with his clean hands and his clean heart. She used to tell herself she hated them, keen, steady, unswerving as they were. She wondered today if she ever had—if it had not been herself, her smallness of soul, that she had despised and loathed, the soul he had seen, in all its dwarfish littleness.

She did not often let her mind linger on those days of her brief married life. She had found such brooding not conducive to even semblance of peace. But this afternoon she had no will left to guard against the rush of memories. How they came crowding, the oddest things in all the world to remember; a look, a touch, a kiss, a simple word, lifted bodily from its context of day or night, or hour, and remembered when other important things had fled her curious brain forever! How good he was, how good! Simple and direct of thought and life as he was, how he had borne with her senseless analyses and her exasperating quibblings! He had promised her he would have infinite patience always.

She remembered that drive home from the play that night, "Magda," when he had repeated that promise of infinite patience. The whole scene flashed back on her, and first of all, the warmth of it all, the warm carriage, her fur-lined coat, his strong arms about her—the night of the day she had first heard that Vawtry had come back! How she had rebelled at the pressure of his arms about her, through the drive and through the night; and yet,

even then she had known them for safe haven! But she would not yield then to that inward whisper.

## XVI

SHE never knew whether she fainted or merely dropped asleep. At all events, she came back to consciousness by herself. No passer-by had disturbed her. No policeman had come along to shake her roughly by the shoulder, because of her shabby garments, and tell her gruffly to "Get along!" She thought first, with thankfulness, of that last thing, that she had not been warned to move on. She had seen so much of that sort of thing during this last year. Her next thought was that it was all but dark.

She sprang to her feet, convulsed with terror. She was far from home, and already she was desperately afraid. This terrible fear of the dark which she used to mock at in others had grown upon her till it had become frantic and incapable of being reasoned with. Her limbs were shaking, and she was quivering through her whole body with the sudden start to life after her long unconsciousness.

She did not wait a moment. She began to run through the twilight, out of the little park. Her terror kept pace with her speed. She seemed to hear steps behind her, pursuing, although when she turned her head she could see no one. Her failing breath made her stop at last. She withdrew to the edge of the sidewalk, close to the flight of steps leading up to an old-fashioned house, whose parlors were brilliantly lighted, and through whose unshaded windows she could see numbers of people. She began to realize that she must not run; that she must walk, and that slowly, if she could hope to get home without aid.

She waited there, getting back her failing breath, and trying to reason herself out of her terror. Once again she debated getting dinner of some sort—perhaps it was food she needed to dissipate her light-headedness. But

she really felt no hunger, and she decided on making tea when she reached her room. It would be hot, and she might get to sleep immediately.

She rested for five minutes, perhaps, and then she started again, with studied slowness, down the street. She almost measured her steps, and she walked with grimly resolute deliberation, though her heart beat high with dread. She managed to control herself so, for perhaps three short blocks, at fearful nerve wear. Suddenly panic caught her again, and she began to run a few steps at a time, and then catch herself back into a walk. She felt tears coming to her eyes, and sobs beginning to choke her. She knew at last that she was sobbing, short, quick sobs, as she alternately ran and walked. A woman turned to look after her. Two men stopped and stared. Her wild terror grew till it held her and shook her.

Suddenly she felt herself rush headlong into some moving body, and then hurled back. Blinded by her tears, in rushing away from those two staring, commenting men, she had run directly into another man, whose approach she had not seen. She reeled backward, quivering with new terror. She heard him murmur some sort of an apology, and then she knew that he was holding her arm, steadying her. She was grateful for the support, yet wilder fear caught her heart. She broke fiercely into his words.

"Please let me go—please let me go!" she said. "Please let me——"

She heard her name spoken quickly, hoarsely, with great amazement. She put her hands to her eyes and pressed them hard against her eyeballs. Then she opened them and stared into Kilvert's face. Tears were rolling down her face, those selfsame tears which had blinded her and made her run into him—of all men in the great city, him! His hand was still on her arm, holding it closer.

"Please let me go!" she repeated in a stunned whisper.

"I hurt you," said Kilvert dully.

He was looking at her, her shabby

dress, her shabby hat, her shabby gloves, even her shoes. His eyes rested at last, as at first, on her face, white and drawn and haggard.

"I hurt you," he repeated, "and you are ill."

"No," she said weakly. "No—I am tired. I—walked too far. Please let me go. I—was only hurrying away from the dark."

The memory of that fear of hers came back to him, the fear which had grown steadily through their marriage. He let his hold on her arm relax, but he turned with her. "If you are far from your home, it will be quite dark before you reach it," he said briefly. "You must let me come with you, Amy."

"No!" she said. She stared at him, her eyes widening with horror. Thirty thousand dollars—coming in Evan Kilvert's person to the place he had just called her home! Ah, perhaps he thought—of course he thought—that she was still with Vawtry—he was offering to go with her to Vawtry's house, to save her from her fear of darkness. She staggered slightly, and she felt his arm steady her again.

"Don't try to go on for a moment," she heard his even voice saying, the voice that always quieted and calmed her. "Wait till you are better, Amy."

She pressed her hands against her eyes again. After her stern resolve not to allow Kilvert, under any circumstances, to find that terrible spot in the city where she existed, there remained just one thought in her fevered brain—she *must* tell him that, after all, she had not actually sinned against him, whatever her intent had been; that she had not gone away with Bertie Vawtry. She felt that if he were a woman he would know that she had not—would see that her poverty spoke her virtue, for her beauty was still great enough to bring her largess.

She felt herself stagger again, and she still kept her hands pressed against her eyes, to hide sickening sight of a tossing world. And more than all else she felt the steady pressure of his arm. It was about her now—she knew that he was holding her up bodily



against him, and she wondered how long she could stand; how long before she must sink through that encircling arm, and drop prone upon the pavement. She must find her voice quickly and send him away quickly—then nothing would matter, not the wet pavement for her shivering body to lie upon, nor the terrifying dark, nor even death.

"You must go away," she managed to say at last. She knew that her voice was pitched very high because her throat was contracting so horribly. "You must go away—I can get home—you must not go with me—even though it isn't his home—I ran away from him—I went away—I wouldn't stay—I want to tell you this—please let me go—"

"Don't!" said Kilvert sharply. His voice came beating on her ears as if from a great distance, and yet she knew he was close beside her. "I know all about it—I know you are not with him."

"I'm—glad!"

Her voice died. Another second and Kilvert was holding her dead weight against him. He looked up and down the street. There was no cab in sight, nothing in sight, save a small boy, hopping homeward on the stone flaggings, jumping cracks with earnestness and skill.

"Here," said Kilvert sternly. "Drop that. Run for a cab, to the nearest stand. Here's fifty cents, and a dollar to come, if you're back in five minutes."

He was back in two minutes, having hailed a passing hansom with shrill command. Kilvert lifted Amy's frail figure as if she were a child, and put her gently in. It was not until the cabman had turned down a side street toward the Avenue that it came to him with strange significance that he had not thought of giving any number save his own, save "Home."

## XVII

SHE roused once during the drive, but Kilvert hushed her quietly, and

she lapsed almost immediately into inert unconsciousness. Once again he spoke to her before they reached the house, and she only moved slightly in answer.

But when they reached his door she was again unconscious. Kilvert lifted her out, and carried her up the steps, seeing for the first time the complications which would begin with James's opening of the door upon them. At least one of those complications, however, he might avert. He called to the cabman to bring him the carriage rugs, and he wrapped them, clumsily enough, about Amy's pathetic figure.

"Mrs. Kilvert is home again, James," he said briefly to that patently astounded man. "She is very ill. Call Dr. Jerrems and then come up for these rugs. No, not Maggie, yet."

That was enough—let them gossip now as they would. At least James's keen eyes had seen only the shrouded figure, and Maggie would not have seen even that. That much he could spare this woman, his wife.

In the dim light of the upper hall he cast the rugs from her, and carried her into his bedroom, and shut the door upon them. He laid her down upon the bed, and then, for the first time since she left his house a year ago, he took from his safe one of those three keys, and opened the door that led into her empty room. He turned on the lights, and saw, with a shiver, the gray film of dust that lay over everything. He opened drawer after drawer until he found at last what he was seeking, one of her beautiful, sheer nightgowns, ready threaded with its fresh ribbons, lying ready all these months which had become a year.

He went back to find her staring about her, dazed, uncertain. The wild gleam in her eyes died as she saw him, and he lifted her quietly.

"Try to sit up, Amy," he said gently. "That chair yonder will be better—here!"

He took her in his arms again, and carried her over to a low, deep chair. He had brought back with him from her room one of her loose robes,

sheltered all this time in that closed closet, and he wrapped her in it. Then he knelt down and began to unbutton her shoes.

"You must be undressed, you know," he said quietly. "Don't try to help yourself too much, only what you can manage easily."

Her hands seemed to have lost their cunning, and she could do but little. She watched him with wide eyes as he quickly loosened her clothes for her.

"There was something else I meant to tell you," she said suddenly. "The number of that place I lived—and I forget it. I can't think. If you go to *The Cry*, and ask the Sunday editor about Amy Garland, he can tell you where it is, but don't tell him it's really me, for I didn't let him know—I didn't let anybody know. The address doesn't matter except that—I think I am going to die—and there's a letter there, Evan. I wrote it to you the day after I went away, about some money I took with me—that five hundred dollars that wasn't mine. I ought to have sent it back, but I was a coward when I thought of that dreadful Potter's Field story I wrote once—you didn't like to have me do it—years ago. It came up to haunt me, but I put it all in the bank and never touched a cent—"

"Amy, Amy!" cried Kilvert. "Don't! Stop thinking of things to tell me. Stop thinking of this awful year!"

"I wanted you to know about the letter," she said dully. "Nobody else ought to read it, and if somebody doesn't take my things away from there—but wait till I'm dead, Evan, to read it. While I'm living there's no need."

Her voice slipped away from her, and for a moment Kilvert thought she had fainted again. He made quick work of his task, and in a few moments lifted her back into the bed. He drew up the coverings carefully about her thin body and wasted face. The tears almost came to his eyes when he saw her press her white cheek rapturously against the cool linen of

the pillow, and feel with pitiful eagerness the fineness of the nainsook gown, and the freshness of its ribbons. He tossed the shabby clothing he had taken from her into a closet, and then he unlocked the door, and rang for Maggie. She came instantly, with eagerness.

"There must be a nurse, Maggie," he said. He let his hand rest for a moment on her faithful arm. "Have James tell Dr. Jerrems that before he starts, if possible. Here is the hall-door key to Mrs. Kilvert's bedroom. She must be moved in there tomorrow."

"Yes, sir," said Maggie. She looked at Amy, once more sunk into semi-unconsciousness. "Lord love us, sir, but she is sick! I'm thinking it will be a bad fever."

"Get her room ready tonight," said Kilvert. "Have the dust and deadness out by morning."

"Yes, sir," said Maggie again, and went away, her head full of shrewd surmisings, but her lips closed to all the world.

The next day Amy was taken from Kilvert's room into her own, and for a month she lay there, too weak to move, held there in complete collapse. Kilvert usually went in to see her once a day. The sight of him might cause her worry, but he reasoned that his absence might cause her far more distress of mind, with her shrinking from his bounty what it was. For the first two weeks it was merely a word or two that they exchanged each day, for power of speech had almost left her. Not once, even when his daily visits lengthened slightly, and their brief conversations lengthened, too, did she refer by word of mouth to her presence there, and he was glad because of her silence. She was too pitifully weak—it hurt him beyond expression to think of what she had suffered of the rigors of poverty during that unspeakable year. He had found her address, had gone to that squalid place where she had lived—he could not endure the thought of it, nor of the pitiful belongings he found there.

He went in to see her one evening, after his return from downtown, prepared to follow a suggestion of her nurse's. He found her dressed and sitting up. For a week past now he had found her so when he came in at six o'clock.

"Don't you think you are well enough to come down to dinner to-night?" he asked her casually, after he had gone through their habitual form of greeting and mutual inquiry.

She glanced quickly up at him, and the blood rolled over her face. She had not been downstairs once since her return.

"I—don't think so," she stammered painfully. "I—am better off up here, for a long time yet; that is, as long as—" Her voice died.

Kilvert checked a sharp sigh. How terrible the situation between them was! It was veneered now, with the silences that illness imposes; but when health came back at last to her what sort of speech awaited them, and what outcome to their lives' tangle!

"Now, you know," he said deliberately, "I came home early tonight, planning for this, because the nurse telephoned me that you had been up all day. It may tire you a bit, but it will be a sort of healthful tire. I shall come back, at all events, before I go down."

He did come back in half an hour and took her downstairs with him. He soon perceived that James's dignified presence irritated her, and he dismissed him for the rest of the dinner. The hour went well, and he was glad for her that monotony of her day was slightly broken, and that her first venture downstairs was an accomplished fact.

"Are you feeling well enough for another hour away from your room?" he asked her as they paused near the library door. "Or would you rather go up now?"

She flushed again and looked away from him. "I'd better go up," she said. Yet she lingered. She spoke at last, her eyes upon her nervous fingers.

"Gerry," she stammered, "or any of them—anybody—you haven't told anybody that I am——?"

"Only Mrs. Taft," said Kilvert gently. "And her only because I promised her long ago that I would. No one else. And she will not come until you send for her."

"Don't send for her," begged Amy shrinkingly. "Nor tell anyone, because——"

She stopped again and stared blankly in front of her. Then she moved toward the stairs.

"Don't come up with me," she said huskily. "No, I can go up by myself—Evan, you will kill me."

Kilvert fell back. He watched her slender figure climb slowly, and with many pauses, the flight of stairs. He watched her sink, exhausted, on the top step, but he made no sign. When her door closed on her at last he went into the library and stood staring moodily from its windows upon the side street.

"Damnation!" he breathed at last. "If I could but shoot him down like the cur he is! But he walks the earth and the woman has paid again!"

## XVIII

By another fortnight's end Amy was practically well. She was still weak, still very nervous, still subject to varying moods. But her color was beginning to come back and her figure began to show some of its old, alluring roundness. Since that first dinner downstairs she had been down almost every evening. She had waited at first for Kilvert to suggest it, and at last, on the fourth night, he held her back a moment at the foot of the stairs before she began her slow ascent, which she made resolutely alone.

"You don't mind coming down to dinner?" he asked her directly.

She glanced at him fleetingly. "No," she said briefly.

"Then please come every night," Kilvert said. "It is doing you good to get away from that room, and a

solitary dinner would seem lonely indeed to me now."

Again she stared blankly away from him. "If you want me," she said at last.

"Indeed I do," Kilvert replied earnestly. "Please go up slowly. Good night."

But she steadily refused his invariable request that she spend part of the evening downstairs.

One evening—it was quite two full months since he had brought her home—he came home to find her already downstairs. For the first time she was dressed in something other than tea-gowns and invalid *négligées*. She wore a thin dress of her favorite pink, which deepened the pale bloom on her cheeks and gave lustre to her eyes. She looked more her old self than she had looked since her illness. She came to meet him from the music-room, where she had been playing. A faint smile was on her lips, yet her eyes were grave.

"Yes," she said, in reply to his cheerful query. "I am really well once more."

Kilvert glanced back at her as he went upstairs to dress. Her tone rang in his ears while he busied himself with his toilet. He sighed once, sharply. The time for silences was passing quickly, and God alone knew what open speech would bring forth.

That dinner was different from any of their others since she had come back. Constraint hung heavy over it. Kilvert almost omitted the familiar "Do come in tonight" as they reached the library door. When she entered with him, for the first time since her return, his pulse gave one mad leap and stopped. The hour had struck for them then, as he had feared.

He took out his after-dinner cigarettes, and offered them to her. She thrust them away with one thin hand. "I haven't smoked them for a year," she said swiftly. "I was too poor. Sometimes I thought I should go mad for lack of them. I shall never touch one again."

She stood before him, watching him

curiously as he shut the box and laid it aside.

"I liked to think that was a part of the penance," she added curtly. "I think that, of all things, it was the very hardest. I shall never sneer at a drunkard's weak will again."

Silence settled over the room. Kilvert leaned moodily against the fireplace, playing with a small bronze figure. Amy's hand caught at the tall back of a chair.

"You will let me talk to you tonight," she said, "because I cannot stay here much longer."

"All this house is yours," said Kilvert hoarsely.

She raised one blue-veined hand. "That is all too good of you," she said. "But it is impossible. I do not know that you will understand me at all, but it was only when I lost my self-respect that I found it. I can't lose it again—merely for the good of your bounty—kind as you are to offer it, and freely as you offer it."

"At least," said Kilvert, "spare us both this a while longer. You are not strong enough."

"I should have to go from this house tonight if I did not speak," said Amy proudly. "You must let me speak tonight. Don't stop me—don't hush me—let me speak."

She looked sorrowfully at him as he turned away. Yet it was easier than when he faced her.

"I have thought and thought and thought over some speech about—that man," she said, with a catch in her throat. "It seems too horrible to speak his name in this, your house, but I never told you anything about him, even when I went away, and there can be no speech between us if I do not speak his name, because he is the head and front of my offending."

Kilvert wheeled about and came over to her. "Will it help you any," he asked her, his voice dangerously low, "if I tell you that I was Eugenia Vawtry's lawyer, and handled all her letters relating to her intended suit for divorce—that I have those letters now, describing with all the pettiness of a



jealous, spiteful woman, every detail of the life, person and moral conduct of the man she married—and I never knew, Amy, until the night I came home to find you gone, that the man was even known to you, much less loved by you.”

Amy dropped like a shot thing into the chair against which she had been leaning. Her eyes stared at him from her white face. “I don’t believe you!” she said, with eloquent faith. “Then you held in your hand at the time the bit of knowledge that would have stopped our marriage as truly as there is a heaven above us. I was mad with love of him—mad! I had struggled for a year or more, after he threw me over to marry that woman—I was sick of torment—I needed money desperately—and I let you marry me—loving that other man, that man!”

“I had hoped there was something of all this which you might spare yourself and me,” said Kilvert. “I know all of this, most of it, all the essential part.”

“It is all essential,” said Amy. “Even the two invitations that came the morning after I met you again, which cried out for new clothes when I had not a penny to spend for them—and my dressmaker’s dun, killing all hope of credit there—and Elinor Darling’s raise to forty dollars a week, when I had not made so much all that month. And so, when you came that afternoon, I went down and said I would marry you—and the first thing I did after you left was to fly to Madame Marabout’s and order the two dresses—on prospective credit, Evan, do you understand? If she didn’t give me those she was going to have trouble with her overdue bill, and she would never have the chance of Mrs. Kilvert’s custom. I paid for those two dresses later, out of your pocket—that was what I married you for!”

“I know practically all this,” said Kilvert, though his lips had whitened.

He was standing on the opposite side of the table from her, looking at her steadily. Her head went down suddenly upon her arms, outspread along the oaken table. The light from the

shaded lamp fell full upon her burnished hair, her beautiful neck and lovely shoulders.

“And then,” she murmured painfully, “I began to find out what hell marriage can be for two people when one loves and the other does not. I believed many times that I hated you, but never in all the world so much as I hated and loathed myself.”

“I know all this,” said Kilvert patiently. “Amy, you will be back where you were—”

She shook off his detaining hand, stretched out to her across the table. “If I were to talk all night I should never make you understand how everything you did and did not do enraged me. I was angry when you compelled me, and angry when you gave me my head. I was angry at your patience and angry at your wrath.”

“I know all this,” said Kilvert.

“And finally”—her voice dropped to a whisper—“I met—him. Everything I wrote you in that last note was true. That night when I was away till two—I had no idea of meeting him there—I should never have dared go to that little café if I had known—only the week before Gerry had told me he was back, and even then neither she nor I knew that the woman he had married was dead. When I looked up and saw him standing across from me—Evan, I tried to be angry—and I could not be. I saw so well why he had married her, and how—all his reasons were no worse than mine for marrying you. We both wanted money. How could I blame him, then? He found me there, in our old corner—and he had read ‘The Good Man,’ and what defense had I against him, when I had battered all of them down myself?”

“Amy!” said Kilvert pleadingly.

“And so, at last, we decided to go away together—I was sick for happiness. I believed he held it for me.” Her voice had dropped till Kilvert could scarcely hear it. “I was to meet him at the station at two o’clock—I was in a panic of fear lest you should come home that day of all days and make me miss my appointment—I hur-

ried away early so that I got there at half-past one. There were queer people there—women with babies, one woman with two. I couldn't see a woman anywhere without one. I was glad, glad that—because I could not have gone away and left it—and I was glad to go. And then I got to thinking—and thinking—and thinking, and finally I looked up, Evan, and it was ten minutes past the hour, and the train was gone, and he had not come. I shut my eyes for three minutes, and I saw straight into souls—and I got up and went away in terror for fear he should be coming, and I sent him a note throwing him over, just as I had written you a note that morning casting you aside, and whether he ever came, or weakened and did not come—I never knew.”

She raised her head at last, which had been bowed so low, and looked with frightened eyes into Kilvert's face. He was leaning across the table, gripping her shoulder fiercely.

“What do you mean?” he said savagely. “Is it possible you are saying you did not go away with him, and live with him for two months——?”

He watched her eyes widen in fear and amazement.

“I told you—I told you,” she muttered. “That night you found me—that I ran away from him—that I didn't stay—Evan!”

Her voice rang through the quiet room. She threw off his hand and rose to her feet.

“Do you mean to tell me,” she said, “that you brought me back here, to the home I left, honestly believing that I had gone away with him, even for a brief space, and gave me food and shelter and care? Evan, Evan!”

She read his answer in his face, and she turned away from him, toward the wall, and laid her face against her up-flung arms.

“God help me!” said Kilvert huskily. “What else could I believe! I knew indeed that you had left him after two months. I thought that was what you were trying to tell me.”

She turned. “You knew I had left

him after two months!” she repeated dazedly.

But it was Kilvert now who turned away. He felt the glad, murderous light leap into his eyes. Not until he found himself repeating to Amy Germaine Taft's well-meant words of comfort did the whole devilish revenge of the man neither of them cared to name lie open before him. The cad had lied, deliberately lied to Amy's friend and to God knew who else. At last he, Kilvert, had his handle for action, and might he be damned forever if he did not make masterly use of it!

He turned back at last to Amy, who was standing close against the crimson wall.

“We must not talk any more tonight, Amy,” he said swiftly. “You are worn to death. Let the rest go till tomorrow. Yes, we will finish it all up then. Let it all rest tonight!”

She moved toward him as he began to speak, and then she paused, repulsed and wounded through and through. Kilvert had turned away from her again. He was making quick calculation of time and opportunity. Tonight or tomorrow—should he wait till tomorrow! Tonight, tonight, tonight—every atom in his blood danced and quivered. He felt a hand fall lightly on his arm. Amy was standing close beside him.

“You shall not let this thing go till tomorrow,” she said proudly. “In intent I sinned against you, and in the eyes of one man at least trailed your name and honor in the dust. But not in deed, Evan, not in deed. There is proof which even you must grant—that woman I took lodgings of that afternoon, even the man who brought my trunk that night——”

He faced her in keenest self-reproach. “How brutal you must think me!” he said. “But I had not even thought of doubt. You could not lie to me now, ever! You could never have lied to me on this sort of thing. Never give me a shred of proof—I have your word.”

He took her hands and drew her to the door. “Try to get some rest,” he said simply. “Let everything else go till tomorrow.”

He took her further, even to the door of her room. When he left her he went directly to his own. He glanced at his watch. It told ten o'clock. There was ample time. He chose to put on riding things. When he went downstairs, he went first to the gunroom, and took down a whip hanging there, which he knew to be tried and keen and true. Then he looked up the apartment address of one Bertie Vawtry, and then—he let himself softly out of the house.

## XIX

SHE stood, weak and shaking, on the spot where Kilvert had left her. She listened to him as he moved quietly about his room, listened till she heard the soft closing of the outer door behind him. He was going—where? The question pulsed and throbbed through her, a steady undercurrent to all her other thoughts.

When she knew that he had really left the house she broke utterly. She covered her face with her hands and walked wildly about her room, shaken with sobs, swayed and torn by her tempest of shame and sorrow and everlasting regret. What sort of god was this man, her husband, who had taken her back to his home, had fed her, clothed her, cared for her, ministered to her, believing her all the time to have been that other man's mistress, cast off or self-discarded—it did not alter the fact as he believed it. And, believing it, he had taken her back, had given her every courtesy, every consideration—it was not human. Never before could she have been convinced that such a man ever lived to bear himself as Kilvert had done. With her old, fatal impulses to self-analysis she tried to think it out, how he could have done the thing, why he should have done it. She stopped herself in the midst of her questionings. Oh, never to question again—if only she might let the subtler issues go forever! For her ceaseless meddlings with motives had brought her at last to this, that she

could not see a deed that was all divine without trying to put some hideously human motive into it.

She caught sight of her face in a mirror, flushed and swollen with her weeping, and she went over and turned off all the lights till the room was dark, save for the soft moonlight streaming through her windows. Her sobbings had ceased, but she was still breathing in quick, shuddering gasps.

In the dark she took off her thin dinner-dress and coiled her hair into a looser knot. She felt about till she found a dressing-gown, long and warm and soft, and she wrapped herself in it with nervous shivers. Then she went over to a window and sat down in a low chair and laid her hot cheek against the cooling window-pane.

He had believed her! She knew that. He must have seen into her soul as directly as she had once, that dreadful day, seen into his. And he had seen Truth there at last. She knew he did not doubt her, that he would never seek out the proof of her story. She wondered if she could ever believe any man or woman so directly, in the face of such damning evidence, and she knew she could not, that doubts would come in spite of her. To simply believe—that, too, was divine, divine as his taking of her back in the face of his belief in her sin.

And all the while that throbbing question, which she was afraid to stop to answer, pulsed through her—where had he gone—for what?

She had gone down to him tonight, resolved to leave his house very shortly. She knew that he pitied her infinitely, but she could not stay merely because he pitied her. She had never tried to make herself believe that he could have a particle of love left for her. His name—he had told her that she must guard that, and she had thrown it back in his teeth, soiled and draggled. He could never forgive that thing, she had honestly believed.

But this blinding discovery of tonight had cast her into a sea of doubts. If he had indeed taken her back as he had, what would this double discovery

mean for him, for her, for them both. The thought of love for him had hardly entered into her thoughts about him ever; not even in these last two months. He had been Haven, Refuge, Sanctuary, and she had been afraid to cling too close because of her pitiful need thereof. But with this crowning knowledge of him, this royal overlooking and all but forgetting, with the revelation of that, the floodgates were down and she could not put them back.

At last she broke again, not into sobs and tears, but into soft murmurings, incoherent words. Her whole body trembled and quivered.

"It is worship," she whispered over and over. "Neither love nor adoration, but worship. There is nothing I would not do for him, nothing. And I cannot offer it, and he may not ask anything of me ever again. There is nothing I would not do for him, nothing. I would give him myself as I could never give myself to any other man. I would give him——"

Her throat contracted; a purple wave of quickening blood poured slowly over her, from her feet to her head. She buried her quivering face in her arms.

"There is nothing under heaven that I would not give him, if he would but take it of me," she said at last, and then she lay quiet and still.

Yet her pulses beat and throbbed with the driving of that ceaseless questioning—where had he gone? And her fear grew as the minutes passed, and then the hours, and he did not come.

It was one o'clock when Kilvert came back. As he entered he flung a sickeningly limp bundle of strings and leather into a corner of the hall. He looked serene and satisfied and happy. He went softly upstairs, past Amy's darkened room and into his own. He turned on the lights, repressing with difficulty a cheerful whistle of a cheerful little air.

And then he looked up, amazed. The dividing door between their rooms had swung wide, and Amy stood in the doorway.

"I had to come," she said quickly.

"Forgive me, I had to know you are safe. You must tell me what you have done—I have been imagining horrible things!"

Kilvert went over to her, and drew her into the room.

"For weeks after you left me," he said, "I tried to make it right to kill that cur, at some convenient season, but I could not make the responsibility enough his—forgive me, forgive me, Amy—I am telling you the truth you asked for. I told you tonight that I knew you had not been with him after two months—he himself told Germaine Taft that thing for his devilish revenge, and she came to tell me that, for my soul's good."

He put his arms about her as she swayed in horror. "Be still," he said as she began to speak. "I know he is a liar and a devil. That was why I cut all things short tonight—to make sure of catching him at home. I had to wait an hour for him. I intended that he should be out of town tonight, but—I forgot. He is not able to leave tonight, but he will go tomorrow, Amy, and he will never return. I have the glad power to make him an exile from this place to the day of my death. He will not come back."

She grew more and more unyielding within his arms. She pulled herself away at last. Kilvert glanced at her, almost distrustfully, and spoke sharply.

"What is it?" he asked. "Are you sorry I marred that devilish beauty of his, and made bloody that lying mouth? Tell me if you are. At least, I have done it."

She shrank at his tone. "I wish you had killed him," she said briefly. "That is how much I care for the little you have done."

Kilvert laughed suddenly. "It is not so little," he said. "Be at rest there."

She was drawing away from him, step by step, her eyes anywhere but on him. Kilvert stepped quickly over to her.

"I said we would let the rest go till tomorrow," he said. "But I am afraid to let you go without saying it all tonight. I am afraid of your analyses



and your subtleties and your woman's logic. I know all that you will say that, even though you did not go, you willed to go. But you said something else tonight that discounts all that, the truest thing that you will ever say—you lost your self-respect to find it. You could not do the things ever again that you have confessed to tonight. The same motives could never sway you. You would not send even for that tiny balance at your bank—not touch that pitiful sum you took away."

"But I almost spent it," she broke in fiercely. "Almost—I went there one day, to take some of it out—I was hungry," she whispered.

She felt a hot tear splash on her cheek and she looked up in wonder into Kilverts working face. He held her close.

"You know I love you," he said. His voice was breaking as she had never dreamed it could break and quiver. "You know I love you, love you beyond shadow of doubting you?"

"Yes," she said. She looked into his eyes still. She could not look away.

"It is worship I give you at last," she told him. "Neither love nor adoration, but worship." She put her arms about his neck, and hid her face from him.

"There is nothing under heaven that I will not do for you," she murmured.



## THE BOHEMIAN

ONCE upon a time there lived an artist. He had lofty ideals in his brain and yellow stains on his finger-nails. Besides, he lived on his relations. He went through three universities, and thence post-graduated to Paris, whither he traveled to absorb some atmosphere.

He returned a finished artist. He must have been good, for, when he entered a museum, he could tell at a glance where Raphael fell down, how bad Velasquez really was, where Murillo was weak, and why Rubens turned out so much poor stuff. It was he who discovered that the Brabizon School—he called it that himself—is not what it is said to be, and that Sir Joshua Reynolds—he hailed him as Josh—was poor on brushwork.

Meanwhile he lived in a hall-room and wore flowing neckties. His shoes were of varying patterns and his clothes were stylish—in 1863. He slept most of the day and walked around all night. When one inquired wherefore, he announced proudly, "I am a bohemian."

He ate sausages cooked over a candle in a plug hat, and slept under the carpet near the floor. He enounced that all marriage contracts should contain a two weeks' clause, and that all property should be divided among everybody. He borrowed three dollars from anybody who would lend it to him; failing three, he borrowed two, or even—from a stingy friend—ten cents. He paid no one and never incurred a laundry bill. When one would inquire wherefore, he announced proudly, "I am a bohemian."

One day the artist "arrived."

An editor saw promise in his work and gave him a three years' contract at sixty dollars per week.

The next month he married and settled down. Before his contract expired he had two children, a savings-bank account, and three life-insurance policies. He goes to bed each night at nine, and his clothes are of the latest fashion. His meals are served to the minute and he stickles abjectly for the influence of the Home.

MORAL: Bohemianism is only an excuse.

S. F. STERN.

## YULE BY THE INGLE

LIKE hopes faint-faltering from the lip  
 The last leaves drop from off the briar,  
 Where now the shriveled, ashen hip  
 Shows once the red rose lit its fire;  
 But by my genial ingle glows  
 Her cheek—the summer's fairest rose!

The garden copse is reft of song;  
 No meadow choir salutes the sun;  
 The wan night long, the white day long,  
 Pale Silence keeps its orison;  
 But where my ingle sheds its cheer  
 Her voice—sweet autumn's own—I hear!

The branches writhe against a vault  
 With tattered vapory streamers strewn,  
 Where outcast winds make mad assault,  
 Blurring the vespers of the moon;  
 But by my ingle, in her eyes,  
 I see spring's hyacinthine skies!

So all the year meets at the Yule,  
 Transmuted by Love's wonder-art;  
 His glass, as doth a magic pool,  
 Make rime and bloom seem one at heart,  
 Yule by my ingle means for me  
 The crown of life's felicity!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



## IF LUCK IS GOOD

THE CITY MAN—I suppose you sometimes have as many as three or four  
 cooks a week.

THE SUBURBANITE (*grimly*)—We do when we can get 'em.



## OF NO IMPORTANCE

“WHOM did Mrs. Quilter, the great authoress, marry?”  
 “Some man, but I’ve forgotten his name.”

## “DALY’S AT EIGHT”

By Ralph Henry Barbour

CARSON, frowning, tore the note into tiny pieces with slow movements of his long, muscular fingers, tossed the fragments upon the marble counter and walked thoughtfully out of the office. For two cents, he told himself, he would go up to his room, prepare for bed and read himself to sleep with the evening papers; and the theatre might go to the dickens!

Out in the onyx-walled corridor he paused irresolutely, observed solicitously—for it was Christmas Eve—by the door-porter. But, after all, it was silly to waste two tickets. On second thoughts he would walk down to the theatre and return them; the exercise would do him good. At the check-room, with the help of an eager attendant, he slipped into his long, fur-lined coat, fixed his silk hat on a well-shaped head, tucked his stick under his arm, tipped the attendant and received a perfunctory “Thank ’e, sir,” and edged his way through the revolving-door. The door-porter grunted his disappointment.

Outside the hotel the sidewalks were two inches deep in snow and slush, and the flakes were still falling softly and deliberately like tiny feathers scattered from one of the hundreds of lighted windows which flared tier on tier up into the darkness. The crosstown cars passed with their rumbling jar curiously muffled, and the clanging gongs sounded as though wrapped in felt. At the corner of the Avenue the arc-light chattered and blinked, and the falling flakes caught the rays and made a purple halo about it.

Carson, drawing on his gloves, turned

southward and strode briskly. The cold, moist air felt good against his face, and he was deaf to the soft blandishments of the hansom-drivers who steered their clumsy craft up to the curb along the block. By the time he had reached the second corner his resentment against Maitland, who had failed him at the last moment, had vanished. After all, an evening in Jack’s company would not have been especially enlivening; a man who is still in the first year of matrimony is scarcely an ideal companion for a bachelor, he reflected; another year, with a pessimistic smile into his up-turned collar, and Jack Maitland would probably hesitate long before disappointing a lifelong friend in order to enjoy the society of his wife!

Hansoms and broughams rolled noiselessly over the snow-carpeted asphalt. Clubs and hotels were brilliantly lighted. Against the drawn curtains of the residences along the way wreaths of holly and evergreen were darkly silhouetted. There was an intangible something in the air, an unwonted briskness and cheerfulness in the faces of the passers-by, that before long had their effect on Carson. Christmas does not, as a rule, mean much to a man of forty whose home is a club or hotel, and to whom the word relative stands only for a few widely scattered and barely known cousins. But tonight, for the first time in several years, the Christmas elixir was getting into Carson’s blood. He threw his head back farther, swung his stick jauntily, viewed his fellow-mortals with a spark of interest and hummed a song as he turned toward

Broadway. He even began to look forward with distaste to the evening spent in his room with only numerous strong cigars and the newspapers for companions.

It was a few minutes after the hour when he crossed Broadway and reached the entrance of Daly's. Carriages were drawing up in a steady stream to empty their occupants into the throng that passed from sidewalk to lobby. Umbrellas bobbed here and there above jeweled heads and costly furs. The electric lights sizzled, merry voices called, the passing cars glided by with softened clamor or paused and went on again with harsh grinding of brakes; the cries of ticket-speculators and newsboys supplied a *presto* in sharp contrast to the unceasing *largo* of shuffling footsteps and slowly crunching wheels.

One glance toward the box-office was sufficient to make Carson hesitate. A long line wound across the lobby and back again. It would be a matter of ten or fifteen minutes to dispose of his tickets by taking his place at the end of that slow-moving coil. There were the speculators, he thought, as he drew aside at the top of the steps, but he disliked trafficking with them. Better to stand the small loss, or—why not? Why not see the show now that he was here? To be sure, he had small relish, as a rule, for solitary theatre-going, but tonight anything seemed preferable to that over-decorated and steam-scented hotel room. It suddenly came to him that if he should go back there now it would be to experience the well-nigh forgotten sensation of loneliness! He smiled blankly at the thought. What had got into him? And as he smiled his eyes lifted and his gaze, unconsciously wandering over the passing throng, paused on a woman's face. And as it rested there a pair of calmly troubled black eyes met it fairly, held it a moment and then were turned away just as Carson felt his pulses stirring with a sensation almost as forgotten as that of loneliness.

She stood with her back to one of the pillars that broke the incoming

stream of humanity. Tall, straight, lithe, the lines of her fawn-hued cloak, which fell straight from shoulders to floor, gave her a slender, graceful dignity that insistently reminded Carson of a figure which had looked calmly down at him from a canvas in the Munich Gallery a few weeks before. But when he looked again at the face the resemblance vanished. The features before him were eminently American, small, expressive, sensitive, even nervous, but distinctly beautiful. The skin was delicately flushed, the mouth held a suggestion of impertinence in the dip of the red lips. Dark eyebrows and a mass of uncovered dark hair which just escaped being black threw into contrast the not unhealthy pallor of the oval face. Long lashes curved above the eyes which, as they turned again to him with a speculative look, Carson mentally vowed were the loveliest he had ever seen. The eyes moved away from him with calm deliberateness, the lights from the street pointing them with sparks of fire.

Somewhere, at the back of his head it might be, there was a faint dizziness which had gone almost before he had time to feel it. Mentally, moving his eyes toward the street with a real effort, he scoffed at himself. Was he a boy? Had his second childhood overtaken him so soon that he should throb at the glance of a pretty woman? Or was it a part of the mild madness which had filtered into his brain this evening? Resolutely he moved toward the steps leading to the foyer, became one of the shuffling, heavily scented, over-dressed throng. The ticket-taker held out his hand for Carson's tickets, and Carson, muttering an apology, wormed his way back and out of the eddy.

He was momentarily insane, he told himself grimly, but he would play the part out. The sensation was distinctly pleasant; he would humor this new mood, even encourage it. Christmas Eve, he thought, like Christmas Day, comes but once a year. The woman still held her place, her gaze traveling over the arrivals as they climbed the steps from the slushy sidewalk. It was



very evident that she was expecting someone, and evident, too, that she had begun to lose hope. Her expression had changed. The lips drooped disappointedly and the dark eyes looked suddenly tired. Carson discovered that here was a woman of possibly twenty-five or six where, but a moment before, had stood a girl of nineteen. But she still held the air and attitude of calm self-confidence, of superiority to the whims and trickeries of fate.

The crowd had thinned now to a straggling stream. At the box-office the line had dwindled to a scant half-dozen persons, and Carson could easily have redeemed his tickets. But he had abandoned the idea. He was going to see the play, and not alone. Late comers scuttled through the ticket-gate, the foyer showed empty beyond the doors and Carson knew that the curtain was up. The woman with the black eyes, seemingly unaware of his regard, drew a tiny watch from beneath her cloak, glanced at it, walked to the edge of the steps and looked down the street. When she turned again Carson was beside her, hat in hand.

Something almost like recognition flickered for an instant in the black eyes, and Carson wondered. It seemed that she was almost on the point of putting out her hand. Perhaps his expression deterred her. Instead she looked calmly inquiring.

"I beg your pardon," said Carson easily, respectfully. "I'm certain you and I are in the same quandary."

"If you mean I am expecting someone who doesn't come," she answered, with an almost imperceptible shrug of her shoulders, "you are right. May I ask how it happens to interest you?"

Her voice was delicious, soft, slow and musical, and her question was robbed by it of all traces of hauteur.

"I suppose I have absolutely no excuse for addressing you," replied Carson, smiling, "unless the fact that misery loves company is some sort of an excuse."

"Suppose we take the excuse for

granted," she answered, with a little demure smile. "Then what?"

"Then I have a favor to ask which sounds so tremendously cheeky that my courage fails me."

"And yet you don't apparently lack courage."

"I deserve worse than that from you," he laughed. "And I will take my punishment cheerfully if you will grant my favor."

"I fear I shall have to learn what it is before I can answer."

"It is this. I have two tickets here. At the last moment my friend failed me. I hate to go to the theatre alone. You find yourself, I fancy, in much the same predicament. Surely it isn't intended that we shall miss our enjoyment merely because of the inconsiderate behavior of our friends?"

"You mean that you want me to occupy your second seat?" she asked calmly.

"I mean that by doing so you will confer the greatest favor on a poor mortal who detests his own company."

"And afterwards?" she asked.

"Afterwards I will do your bidding implicitly."

She studied his face thoughtfully a moment. Then,

"You look like a gentleman," she said half to herself.

"I hope my looks don't belie my actions," he replied.

She turned toward the street. An instant passed. Then,

"Let us see," she said, and slipped her hand within his arm.

The first act was well along when they took their seats halfway up the orchestra. They had left their wraps at the cloak-room and now Carson beheld his companion in an evening gown of pale blue that added threefold to her charms. The gown was cut away slightly at the neck and a string of turquoises fell over the lace edge. Other turquoises shone dully on her fingers when she had removed her gloves, and with them was a hoop of diamonds on the third finger of the right hand, a solitaire beside it, and a gold band on the middle finger. Car-

son saw and speculated. In her hair was a single bar of diamonds.

There was no conversation during the first act. She watched the stage attentively, and Carson strove to do the same, yet could not resist occasional side glances at the delicate profile of his companion. Finally he lost all track of the play in wondering who and what she was. Her total lack of embarrassment under circumstances which would have sent many women into mild hysterics suggested unflattering conclusions. Yet he had only to look at her face to be certain of the injustice of them. If her rings were to be believed, she was married; and there was that about her which gave support to this belief. But married or unmarried, she was charming, and he blessed Jack Maitland for his delinquency. The curtain fell at last, and she turned to him with a smile as the lights flared up.

"Now you may talk," she said.

But for a moment he said nothing, merely looked at her. She shook her head.

"You mustn't do that," she reproved.

"What?"

"Wonder who I am and why I—came."

"Mustn't I?"

"No; it's not fair. There must be no naming of names."

"But I don't mind telling you mine, if you care to know it," he said craftily.

"Very well, then; who are you, please?"

"Carson, George Frederick, very much at your service."

"Profession?"

He shook his head. "I have none."

"Business?"

"Nor business."

"What do you do in the world?"

"Nothing that's worth while. I travel a bit now and then, and sometimes I try to bore people with what I've seen."

"You mean that you write books?"

"I have written two or three."

"About——?"

"One about Persia, another about Korea, another about Siberia."

She nodded her head. "I know; I've seen your books."

"You don't happen to have read any of them?"

"No; travel doesn't interest me."

"I am sorry." He sighed deeply.

"Why?"

"I thought I was about to discover one person who had read them."

She laughed. "I am sorry to disappoint you. Is it so bad as that?"

"Very nearly."

"But—you have money?"

"Too much."

"And friends?"

"A few—perhaps. I thought I had one in particular until tonight. You see how he has used me—thank heaven!"

"He was to have sat where I am sitting?"

"Yes. I reached New York three days ago and sought him out. I found that he had taken advantage of my two years' absence abroad to get married."

"How inconsiderate!"

"Exactly. He asked me to his apartment. I declined to go."

"Declined? But why?"

"I wanted him to realize the fact that I disapproved. But he persisted, and at last I yielded. Tomorrow I am to take dinner with my usurper."

"You mean his wife?"

"Yes."

"But—usurper?"

"Decidedly. You are a woman and you won't understand. When a man marries he is lost to his male friends."

"But why? Surely the wife doesn't ask that?"

"Not consciously. But—you can see for yourself. 'Daly's at eight,' I told him. Half an hour before that time he sends me a note pleading unforeseen circumstances. Don't I know the unforeseen circumstances? I could tell you the color of her hair."

"Well?" she laughed.

He looked at her own dark hair.

"Yellow," he answered.

"I believe you are only guessing, if you've never seen her."

"Well, I am; but I wager I am right."

"But perhaps you are doing him an injustice. Is he a business man?"

He nodded. "Lawyer, save the mark!"

"Then isn't it possible that he may have had a sudden call to his office or—or somewhere?"

"You are merciful," he answered, "but—" He shook his head sadly as one who has long watched the duplicity of man.

"Now, my case is a point in proof," she said. "I, too, was told 'Daly's at eight.' But—well, you see!" She threw her hands apart. "My—my husband was obliged to go to his office right after dinner to meet some troublesome persons. I was to come here and wait for him. If he didn't appear I was to go home again. I didn't obey very well, did I?" she added smilingly.

"I congratulate you on your disobedience," he said gravely. "Husbands should be taught their places."

She laughed softly.

"There spake a bachelor."

"Without bias," he added. "It is possible I have met your husband," he went on carelessly. "You said his name was——?"

"Quite so." Their eyes met and they laughed merrily.

"You mustn't lay traps," she said.

"What is it about snares and the unwary?" he asked. "You certainly are not one of the unwary."

"I wonder if you really believe that?" she said, frowning her white forehead into thoughtful lines.

"I really do. I think—pardon the presumption!—I think I can tell you a great deal about yourself, your character, likes and aversions, you know. Shall I try?" He turned further toward her, a smile half ironical, wholly provocative on his good-looking features.

She shook her head. "I'd rather you didn't. Somehow, I fancy you might hit it." There was a pause during which she took up her program and idly turned the leaves, and wherein he found himself looking, as through a microscope, at the dead-white curve of her tiny ear and the threads of dark

hair sweeping upward from behind it. The sudden sense of proximity came to him with a shock that sent his pulses to racing again. Then, without looking up:

"Well?" she said. "I am waiting."

"But I thought you didn't want to hear?" he protested.

"I don't," she laughed; "so tell me."

"First of all, then," he answered, dropping his voice, "you are brave in a physical way that women seldom are. I don't believe you have ever been frightened."

"Well—but go on."

"I do not think you are amiable in the popular sense of the word. I can imagine you all kindness, gentleness and self-effacement where your affections are engaged, and fiercely cruel when they are not and when it pleases you to prove your sex."

"You are uncanny," she said, with a little shiver not wholly feigned.

"You have many masculine qualities. You hold deceit to be the greatest of all the deadly sins, and sincerity the most exalted of the virtues. You detest hypocrisy above everything. You are a staunch friend and a bitter enemy. I doubt if you are very domestic; I think you like action better than ease; had you been a man you would have led other men. You have spoken of your husband, and so I know you to be married. You married for one of two reasons only: either because you were overwhelmingly in love or because your life had become dull and you craved interest, perhaps excitement; for, in spite of your calmness, excitement is life to you. Were you a man I would seek your friendship; as it is——"

"As it is?" she asked, without looking up.

"As it is—I throw myself on your mercy," he answered, smiling a little. "Your favors are not to be compelled."

"You are modest," she said lightly.

"No, I am only pretending to be. But you haven't told me how well or ill I have succeeded in my reading."

"No. I sha'n't do that. Should you never meet me again it won't mat-

ter whether you know or not. If you do—there will be no need of my telling you."

"Whether we meet or don't meet is for you to decide," he answered gravely.

"I have already decided," she answered smilingly and calmly.

"And the decision is——?"

"You shall hear it afterward."

The orchestra was taking its place again; a few scrapings of 'cello and violins sounded through the hum of voices. There was silence between them for a moment. Then, turning almost impulsively, she asked:

"Will you make me a promise?"

"Not blindfolded," he answered.

"You," she smiled, "are not of the unwary, either, it seems. Well, promise me this—that you will not keep your engagement for dinner tomorrow with your friend."

He tried to read the reason for the request, but her face baffled him.

"Am I to hear why?"

"No." She shook her head. "Call it a whim."

"I don't think you have whims," he answered doubtfully.

There was that almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders that he was coming to look upon as in some manner symbolical of her.

"You will promise?" she asked.

"No," he answered calmly, "I can't promise."

"I didn't think you would," she said thoughtfully. There was nothing of either chagrin or disappointment in her tones. "But," she continued, "if you find, when you think it over, that it is possible to break that engagement, will you do so?"

"That I can promise," he answered, adding, "It isn't necessary, I fancy, for me to tell you that you have aroused my curiosity."

"Not at all necessary," she answered, with a laugh. "The art of arousing curiosity is a woman's most important—and infallible—accomplishment."

"May I flatter myself that you consider me worthy of a display of that accomplishment?"

"That, again, is not fair," she answered as the lights went down. "If I say no you will think me uncivil; if I say yes you will take it that I have said more. I prefer to be silent."

"Thereby proving your absolute mastery of the aforesaid accomplishment."

She smiled and took up her program.

The last act passed in a blaze of color, a whirl of action and an avalanche of melody. When the curtain finally dropped Carson piloted his companion to the cloak-room, helped her on with her wraps and silently accompanied her to the lobby. There he turned to her questioningly.

"A hansom, please," she answered.

He gave the order and returned to her side. It was still snowing and had grown colder.

"I want to thank you for your kindness," he said. "It was good of you."

"I wonder if you think that?" she asked, her black eyes trying to read his face.

"I usually mean what I say," he answered simply.

"I believe you do," she replied. "Is that my carriage?"

He led her down the steps, across the slushy sidewalk, and helped her into the hansom. Then he looked at her again inquiringly, smiling gravely. She shook her head. He closed the doors.

"And your decision?" he asked.

"It's out of my hands," she said. "We shall meet again very shortly, I think. And—and I've a confession to make."

"Yes?"

"I had seen your picture and I knew who you were when I first saw you to-night."

"Indeed!" he said. "Then I have sufficient vanity to construe your course into a compliment."

"Good night."

"Good night," he answered. He held her gloved hand an instant ere it was drawn slowly but decisively away. "Until that next meeting which I fear I can't believe in as implicitly as you do."



"It depends on you," she answered, settling back against the cushions.

"On me? Then——"

"Move on there, hansom!" commanded a policeman.

Carson removed his hat, stepped back and caught an inscrutable smile from the depths of the carriage. Then he lighted a cigar and walked thoughtfully back to the hotel through the snow.

Three days later Jack Maitland found a note among his morning's mail which at once puzzled and annoyed him. After reading it through he emitted a grunt of disapproval.

"What do you think that idiot has gone and done?" he demanded. Mrs. Maitland observed him calmly across the table.

"I'm sure I don't know, Jack. And who is the idiot?"

"Why, Carson, of course. Listen to this:

"DEAR JACK:

"When you get this I shall be crossing again. And the fact will prevent me from keeping my engagement with you and Mrs. Maitland for the theatre on Thursday. It looks a shabby trick, old man, but circumstances have arisen which render my presence on the other side of the globe rather necessary. Please present my compliments

to your wife, and assure her that only imperative duty could have kept me from the pleasure promised by your kind invitation. Make my peace with her, Jack, and forgive me yourself for running off in this impolite manner. I fear I didn't succeed in half telling you how much I enjoyed the Christmas dinner; it was a glimpse of domestic paradise to this poor beggar of a bachelor. And may your paradise blossom fairer and fairer with every year. If I ever secure a permanent address where I am going I will send it to you in the hope that you will some day drop me a line. If not, give me a thought now and then until we meet. Remember me to Mrs. Maitland, please, and accept all good wishes for yourself.

"Sincerely,

"CARSON.

"Now—now, what do you think of that?"

Mrs. Maitland arose from her chair and walked to the window.

"I think," she said quietly, "I think he did what was right—and brave."

"Right? Brave? How do you mean?" asked her husband irascibly.

"I mean," she answered, without turning her head, "that he was brave to—to give up all this for—his duty."

"Duty!" scoffed Maitland. "Duty! His duty's toward his friends sometimes, it seems to me!"

His wife smiled unseen and sighed unheard.

"Perhaps that is what he thought," she whispered.



## GETTING HIM AT A DISADVANTAGE

HOLT—But how are you going to manage it so that you can say all those cutting things to Castleton?

SCOTT—Easy enough. I'm going to invite him to take luncheon with me.



## ALL HE CARED ABOUT

FIRST SURGEON—Have you saved your man?

SECOND SURGEON—No, but I've saved his appendix.

## "SPIRIT"

"I DRINK no wine." The butler bland  
 Paused, blankly staring, flask in hand.  
 The bright-eyed belles and dull-eyed beaux  
 All roused from dinner-table prose  
 Gave heed such heresies demand.

Then slanted glance, light laughter fanned,  
 And whispered jest behind the hand,  
 At who dares say to friends and foes,  
 "I drink no wine."

Once more the gulf of silence spanned,  
 By that clear voice. With courage grand,  
 "'Wine is a mocker,' but there flows  
 A fount, clear, pure, to heal earth's woes.  
 I come, sah, from Kentucky, and  
 I drink no wine!"

GRACE MACGOWAN COOKE.



## WE SUFFERING CITIZENS

BRIGGS—I see that young Tutter came near being clubbed to death by a  
 New York policeman.

GRIGGS—What offense was he innocent of?



## AN INFERENCE

"WHEN I awoke from the operation I felt as if I was burning up."  
 "I see. You must have thought that it had been unsuccessful."



## PARADOXICAL

"IT seems strange," said Deacon Mayberry, as he counted the money after  
 church, "that a large congregation can be so small."

# THE IMMORALIST

By Frederick Fenn

“YOU have come at a curious psychological moment, Morton,” said Godfrey Fawcus. “I am alone, which is unusual; my wife has not been very well the last few days—these fogs, I suppose—and has gone down to Cromer to stay with the Glendowers, and I was in a ruminating mood—thinking of the past and of you.”

“Enjoying a little bachelor liberty, I suppose?” said Morton, K.C.

“Yes; and oddly enough I don’t enjoy it, which surprises me. Marriage is so much a matter of habit. I suppose that’s why widows and widowers marry again so distressingly soon. They have got into the habit of being married and can’t get out of it.”

“And where do I come in in these meditations? I know I have the habit pretty badly. Is that it?”

“I was wondering whether I was on the whole a suitable friend for you. I was wondering whether we should any of us be suitable friends, husbands or wives for each other if we told the whole, frank, brutal truth. People are very fond of talking about the beauty of truth, but to me the truth is for your doctor or your confessor only—according to your temperament.”

“Truth requires courage, perhaps—I see your point—like a visit to the doctor.”

“Reticence requires courage and even more strength of character. Any weak-minded fool can blab out things. It requires a strong man to hold his tongue, year in and year out, and not even leave a diary.”

“What are you leading up to? I am not a doctor, nor a priest.”

“No. But you probably know—I am obliged for the moment to follow the silly habit of making arbitrary divisions—that there are two sorts of men to be commonly met with: those to whom a confidant is essential, and those who regard confidences merely as a manifestation of weakness. To indulge for a moment in generalization, I may say that the former are usually despised and the latter misunderstood—by women. Am I boring you?”

“Not by any means,” said Morton, K.C., carefully cutting a formidable cigar.

“To the former belong that large army of married men, who, after suffering under some acute disappointment in their bachelor days, allow themselves to be drawn out by the first sympathetic woman they meet, and are caught, to use the old north-country phrase, ‘on the rebound.’ Subsequently, when their wives learn to despise them for their constitutional weakness they inveigh against the unsatisfactoriness of women in general and promptly confide in another fair sympathizer, or else, gently pathetic over their bachelor days, they pose as the matrimonial martyrs whom we all know. To the latter division belong that smaller company who are not wholly happy in marriage because they expect their wives to understand what they never explain. Women revel in explanations. Walk down the street behind two women and in nine cases out of ten you will find that they are explaining things to each other. If you follow two men they are either arguing or are silent. When men don’t explain things women explain them to themselves. If the

explanations make them happy the wise man holds his tongue. The cup of happiness that is filled by an explanation is always getting empty. It needs constantly filling, like your glass. The whisky is by you."

"Thanks," said Morton, K.C. "And still I say, how does this affect me?"

"I'm coming to that," said Godfrey Fawcus, contemplating the end of his cigar. "I suppose you would not consider me communicative?"

"Hardly."

"Very early in life I had a hard experience. If I had had a confidant then—a wise confidant—my course of life might have been very different. However, I had no one and, on the whole, I am glad. I confide in myself. Nothing is worth explaining to other people."

"What of the people," said Morton, K.C., "who need explanations?"

"They can go."

"You would not relent to keep friend or wife?"

"No. Not one is worth an explanation to me. But I am fairly honest in my confidences to myself, and when I am most honest I know that no one really matters to me, myself least of all. Still, I have had an odd life."

"You never wanted children?"

"If I had a child," said Fawcus, with a shade more feeling, "he or she would matter. It would even be worth while explaining to one's child, but you must know, with your experience, that one's child would be the last person to need or demand an explanation. However, I have no child. The real point of all this preamble is, that I want you to understand that I am not asking you for sympathy, or for closer friendship, or trying to break our friendship. I am merely in the mood to tell you a curious story which interests me as I think it will interest you. Even the most uncommunicative man once in his life has a moment of unreserve. It may come when he is facing death with a stranger, and make him a friend. It

may come when a woman has met him at a crisis, and give him a wife. It may come years after marriage to a man such as myself who has never made a confidant of man or woman in his life, and is now merely prompted to tell a very curious story because one of the people who helped to write it has stumbled in at the psychological moment."

Morton, K.C., rose and looked dubiously at the fire a moment. "I don't believe much in confidences myself," he said at length. "The wisest thing a man ever did to me was preventing my confiding in him when I wanted to. Think a minute before you go on."

"I am past all that."

"Very well, go on," and his listener settled down comfortably.

"Would you take me for a murderer?"

"Hardly."

"That's what I am."

"I never believe the self-accused," said Morton, K.C. "There is always a sort of glory in exaggerating one's follies. Quite as many people yearn for a halo of crime as for a halo of saintliness."

"Don't forget that the rule proves the exception. I'm the exception."

"Was it accident or justifiable homicide?"

"Neither—just cold-blooded, premeditated crime; but I must begin at the beginning. Do you remember the case of Carlton Brede—some twenty years or so ago?"

"Yes, very distinctly. I often wondered what became of that man."

"Now you know."

"You mean that——?"

"Yes," said Fawcus, holding out his cigar and contemplating the long white ash thoughtfully. "That," and he flicked off the ash, "was Carlton Brede; the live end—how do you like these cigars?—is Godfrey Fawcus, with a house in Mayfair, a good cook, and a wife for the sake of whose happiness he lives."

"I should like to know more," said Morton, K.C. "The case, your case—interested me enormously at the time,



but I always felt there was something I did not understand."

"You didn't understand the point—that was all," said Fawcus. "You wouldn't have done what you did if you had understood. There's nothing so paralyzing to action as full comprehension of a case. I, who knew all about the affair, stood quietly by—you, who didn't know, were in a fever of anxiety to save me."

"I remember you were not very grateful. I put that down to shock."

"It was more annoyance. I was puzzled. I was like the man who has decided to commit suicide and who is dragged out of the water by some officious humanitarian. Instead of a sudden plunge into oblivion, he finds himself confronted by all the old troubles, plus wet clothes. However, you need not complain of me. I gave you your first chance. I have watched you ever since. You have gone far, but the Carlton Brede affair was your stepping-stone to success."

"That is perfectly true," said Morton, K.C. "I might have waited many years for such another opportunity. I benefited, undoubtedly."

"I am glad to hear you say that, because, though the story I am going to tell you is not a moral one—though it shows, in short, a curious inversion of the ordinary ideas accepted by the world, yet so far as I can see, out of every one of the actions for which I have been most condemned, or should be most condemned by the world if it knew, substantial, direct good has come to all those most intimately concerned. It has all been very curious and very interesting to watch. I don't know whether many other people have the same faculty, but I have always been able to detach my intelligence from my personality, and let the one criticize the other. No one has ever been more cynically amused at the doings of Godfrey Fawcus than myself—no one has stood and watched and been more surprised at times at their unexpected character, than myself."

"An unhealthy characteristic, perhaps," said Morton, K.C.

"Undoubtedly, but nevertheless interesting, and you must remember that this which I am telling you is not a healthy tale. I only tell it you because I feel like talking tonight and because anything which illustrates the complexities of human nature should be interesting or valuable to you. . . . So we'll go on. . . . Carlton Brede was an only child. My father was a successful, old-fashioned wine-merchant, and I received the usual education of a prosperous man's son, Harrow, Oxford, and a year's travel. At the end of that year's travel I was summoned home suddenly by the news of the death of both my parents. It was something of a shock to me. I had not up till then realized that one's own friends and relations did die. I knew of death merely as a rather tiresome event which never interfered with one's own family circle. When I got over the shock I sold the business and found myself alone in the world with a comfortable little fortune of some sixty or seventy thousand pounds. I came to London to enjoy myself. That was where my first difficulty arose. All the young men of my acquaintance—and as a rich bachelor I soon had many friends—enjoyed themselves after a fashion. To me the thing was not so easy. I was always like the little boy who said: 'Mother, why do I dislike the things I dislike so much more than I like the things I like?' I was easily bored, I remember—not easily entertained. Women amused me only for a little while. I didn't marry nor was I particularly vicious. I sampled every kind of life, not from vicious motives, but from a mild curiosity. I need hardly tell you that I found it all very weary, stale and unprofitable. There is no greater fraud than a gilded haunt of vice—it is really a cruel disappointment to a young man who wants to be shocked and desperately fascinated. I yawned and came away. However, you know what London was then and how young men amused themselves. I needn't enlarge on this point. I only want you to understand that I grew un-

terably weary of everything. The one thing that amazed me then—it amazes me to this day—was the prospect of the outcasts and beggars, the flagrant failures in life, some maimed, some hideously diseased, some merely destitute, who begged of me at street-corners. If I, who could gratify every reasonable want, found life so little worth living, why did these poor creatures cling to life so tenaciously? It seemed grotesque then; it still seems so. If never turning a deaf ear to the appeal of these poor failures shows a virtue, then I have that virtue, and I am afraid it is the only one. A man stopped me the other night in a dark street and asked me if I knew him. I didn't. Then he told me who he was, and I remembered him as one of my contemporaries who had found enjoyment where I had failed. I had known him last in Upper Burma at the mines—oh, yes, I traveled a bit—now, hideously disfigured by disease, he lived in some squalid den on a small allowance made by the relations who refused to see him. 'I come out only at night,' he said, 'so that people may not see me. I'm not good to look at.' When he left me he slunk away in the shadows. Can you tell me why that man lives—what satisfaction he finds in the excuses which he makes to himself for continuing to exist?"

"I can only suppose," said Morton, K.C., "that just as we take more trouble to preserve life's failures than to give healthy children a chance in life, so in some strange way the desire for life is stronger in these weaklings than in the strong."

"Well, to get back to my story. Some years before—before we met, shall we say?—I came across a girl who rather amused me. I found out where she came from—a dingy little suburb. I found that she was supposed to be going to marry a vulgar little cad whom she hated. I dare say he had his good points; to me then he was merely a vulgar little cad. We wandered about the world together for some years, and then parted by mutual consent. Morally speaking, I

ruined her life, but years afterward she wrote to me thanking me for all I had done for her. I remember the wording of her letter because it made rather an impression on me. 'I won't say,' she wrote, 'that those three years with you were the happiest in my life, because I am happier now, and yet all my happiness I owe to you.' Odd outcome of a purely selfish liaison, wasn't it? I had no moral sense, and when later I ran away with a married woman who attracted me, she thanked me with tears in her eyes for sacrificing myself to save her from a situation which was killing her. She got her divorce, but when the papers said we were in Paris together she was in Rome and I was on my way to Burma. That was the nearest approach to a moral action to which Carlton Brede can lay claim. Oddly enough, I know her now, and my wife and I dine there sometimes."

"Married again?" said Morton.

"Oh, yes; and very happily. She is, I think, the only person in London besides yourself who knows that Carlton Brede and Godfrey Fawcus are one and the same. I never told her—she guessed. Women can't reason, but their guesswork is marvelous."

"And what does she guess about the death of old Castlemere?"

"You forget I was acquitted, and if she guesses the truth, as she may—well, women are more tolerant than men about the faults of men they have any reason for thinking well of."

"Yes, you're right there."

"And so we come at last to the episode in which you figure——"

"Episode?" said Morton, K.C.

"That is really about all it seems to me now. I hope you have gathered from all these preliminaries that I was getting into that state in which nothing matters—I was tired, bored, wearied to death. Nothing in life seemed worth anything. I craved new sensations and could not find them. I was, in short, in that thoroughly unhealthy morbid state which brings some people to the dock and makes others offer to marry criminals."

A professional poisoner can find wives more easily than any other man. The greater a woman's sins the more readily will men fall at her feet. I dare say you have come across evidences of this in the course of your professional experience."

"Often."

"I sat at home and thought of suicide—not the vulgar over-the-Embarkment kind of thing—but opening my veins in a bath, or something lingering which would afford me plenty of time to record my impressions. I was quite conventional, you will notice, and had the usual idea about the value of these impressions to the world. In short, I had in an aggravated form the self-conscious mania which makes hysterical young women write diaries to be opened after death, or plan beautiful death-bed scenes for themselves, after sacrificing themselves for their families or their lovers."

"There are only two cures that I know of," said Morton, K.C.; "work or marriage, and work is the safer."

"Quite so, but work didn't enter into my calculations. I knew nothing about it. Work to me was merely a healthy occupation invented to keep the poor quiet and contented, so I clung to the idea of a sensational suicide, and at last an idea came to me. There are certain sensations, I said, that only one person in a thousand may know, because one may not know them and live—death is the penalty for enjoying them. Now I do not want to live, so my hands are free. Have you ever thought, Morton, how largely you can increase your experience and knowledge of human nature, and of yourself, if you never stop to consider whether death will exact its dues? The man who does not care whether he lives or dies is the man who knows life."

Morton, K.C., got up and stood with his back to the fire. "Yes," he said, "I know. I could tell you a story about that, but not tonight. Go on." He helped himself to a whisky-and-soda, and sat down again.

"So I had an idea, as I told you before. I said: 'I will kill a man; not a useful man, but some man who would be better dead. I will neither deny nor admit the crime when it is discovered. They shall take me, try me, and hang me. The sensation of stopping a man's life will be new and so will the sensation of being tried for my life, and in the end they will hang me, which will be newer still. It will be a long drawn out, sensational suicide.'"

"It's a pity there was no one to take you in hand at that time," said Morton, K.C.

"I don't know—I have no regrets. The last weakness is to spend one's time regretting."

"There's something in that."

"While I was looking for a suitable subject, because I did not want to plunge the world into sorrow or take a useful life, chance threw a victim in my way. Old Castlemere asked me to dine with him. As I dare say you know, he was a malignant old scoundrel and my cynical indifference to everything pleased him. After dinner he told me all about young Bain, his presumptive heir. Young Bain was intended to marry Angela Morganstown—Lord Morganstown's youngest. The old man had set his heart on the marriage, and the Castlemere fortune was to set that tottery family of scapegraces on its legs. I had met Angela once and loathed her. She was one of those young women who beat around country-houses and try to ensnare conscientious young men—fortunately they don't meet many conscientious youngsters, and so usually only succeed in getting a bit smirched themselves. The Bain boy was a nice, honest lad who had set his heart on a nice little girl—the daughter of a penniless colonel, and in defiance of old Castlemere had married her. They started life together in the Isle of Wight on a hundred and fifty pounds a year, which the boy had from his mother. The news of this runaway marriage only came by the last post while we were smoking after dinner. The malignancy

of that old devil as he read the letter showed me that he was my man. He did not say much, but quite enough to show me that the boy was going to be done out of every farthing of his inheritance although he had made a will in the lad's favor. He more than hinted that he should leave every penny to a distant relative who ran a money-lending business. Castlemere always admired this rogue—he traded on the name of Sydney Carlton & Co.—and originally financed him and made a very good thing out of it, by the way."

"I had a case through my hands the other day," said Morton, K.C. "They still go on—Carlton & Co., Pall Mall, East and Broad streets, Manchester."

"That's the thief. Well, my chance had come. We chatted very amicably and I had a final drink and at midnight his old butler showed me out, not, though, till I had put a globule of cyanide into the old scoundrel's final glass of toddy. I had meant to shoot him or suffocate him, but I think my nerve failed me—I never liked scenes—sensations, not scenes. In the morning they arrested me on the butler's statements. I was the only person who had seen him that day. They tried to trace where the cyanide had been bought, you remember. I'd had it since I was in Burma, five years before. Bain couldn't be suspected, because, as I told you, he was in the Isle of Wight. I was afraid the next day that I had been too careful and that there would be no case against me, but the old man wrote that almost indecipherable, accusing scrawl."

"My defense was, I remember, that it was a dying message to his oldest friend," said Morton, K.C.

"It was really an accusation. He knew I was unscrupulous, but he could not understand why one dog should eat another. He was sure I'd poisoned him, but he saw no motive."

"That was what saved you. No one could see any motive."

"That was what saved me, and I didn't want to be saved. My elaborate suicide was a failure. I had no

defense. I engaged no counsel, but you, seeing a chance to distinguish yourself, came forward and asked me if you might defend me. I thought this would give an added interest to my last hours, and agreed. To my amazement the jury acquitted me and I came out of court a free man. I cannot explain to you my sensations then. People said I was stunned with the horror and shock of it all, but I was merely feeling like a man who has cheated at cards, or who has bought a valuable object with a dishonored cheque. I wasn't unnerved at the murder or at the prospect of hanging, but I was aghast when I found that I was not going to be made to pay."

"I can see you must have been in a bit of a quandary."

"Yes, it was a failure; and I didn't care to try again. I left London after a little while, when I had begun to see the grim humor of it all. I realized the whole of my little fortune and tried South Africa. Those were before the days of the boom, and it was easier then to make a fortune. I found entertainment for a little while in watching people—who I was convinced had less brains than myself—making fortunes. At last I got bitten with the fever, and I said: 'If these fools can make fortunes, why not Godfrey Fawcett?' I had changed my name then. Just as I had speculated with my life, not caring whether I lost or won, so now I speculated with all my little fortune. Success, I need hardly tell you, came to me at once. I was envied, imitated, bowed down to. In a few years I tired of it; but when I came back to England I was a rich man. No one recognized Carlton Brede in the wealthy colonial—you didn't yourself—and it amused me to revisit old haunts, to be proposed anew for my old clubs and to see who had gone up and who had gone under. Young Bain, as you know, got a title for that Egyptian Agricultural business and his wife worships him. You will have one if you like when the next government comes in. Bob Mainwaring, the most honest of all my old asso-



ciates, took a worthless woman seriously and is now killing himself with drink. Davidson Hutton, of the Guards, died of enteric in the war, and his wife is making a futile attempt to conceal her satisfaction at the release. It's an odd world."

"So you married and settled down like the rest of us."

"I must tell you the whole thing frankly now, though it reflects little credit on me. I had not been long in London before I saw that I was expected to marry. Eligible daughters were paraded before me. I was expected to buy. I went out a good deal, and I very soon got tired of hearing mothers sing the praises of their children. Then I had an idea, an almost moral idea. I said to myself: 'All these well-grown young women, endowed with every physical and material advantage, are likely to have a dozen chances of matrimony. I will marry one of the failures in the matrimonial race. I will see if I, with my money, can make some disappointed woman happy.' I did not have to look far for one. At the Glendowers' I met Jane Barbican. Old Barbican, of Barbican & Pettigrew, Copthall avenue—I dare say you remember them—had gone under about a year before. The Glendowers had found Jane a home—a home, heaven save the mark!—as a secretary-companion, a sort of upper servant who can be bullied with impunity because she cannot afford to give notice. I asked her to marry me. She accepted after several refusals. She could not understand why I wanted to marry her. I did not intend that she should. London was very much disturbed for a week, and then 'our set,' if you please, seriously considered whether they could take us up. To their amazement they soon discovered that, to put it vulgarly, the boot was on the other foot. Jane and I decided to be very exclusive. We traveled, we entertained our friends and our friends only, and, oddly enough, we became very happy. I married my wife, Mor-

ton, without any thought of admiring her, much less of loving her. You won't misunderstand me if I say that my motive was more like that of someone who finds a starving, bullied cat or dog and brings it home to care for it. I didn't even think her pretty, much less beautiful; but I meant to make her happy, and I succeeded. She grew young again, she grew beautiful, in my eyes certainly. I don't think there is a happier married couple in London."

"I heard someone mention you the other day," said Morton, K.C., "as an instance of the desirability of making a love match. He was holding you up as a notable example."

Fawcus smiled. "Yes, I know that we are regarded like that, but the humor of it, Morton, do you see the humor of it—Carlton Brede, in spite of himself, being a moral object-lesson? And I can say nothing even if I wished to."

"Mrs. Fawcus, of course, knows nothing?"

"I married her to make her happy."

"Yes, of course; I see."

"And I am quite happy myself; that's the only moral in this immoral recital."

"It's not a bad one."

"There's one point, though. If there's one thing I believe, it is that in this life we always pay. I've led what you might call an immoral life, a selfish life. I've been willing to pay, but I never have paid. 'The sins of the fathers,' that's of course ethically true, but I have no children; yet there is the reckoning—am I to be an exception? If not, when am I to pay, and how? Irregularities, follies, sins if you like, make a score which always must be settled sooner or later. Don't you agree? Time was when I was willing to settle any score with life or fortune. I am not willing now."

"I don't see how you are going to be called upon now," said Morton.

"Don't you?" said Fawcus grimly. "Suppose something should happen to my wife?"





## THE EXILE

O COOL green earth and quietude!  
 God's earth of woods and dew!  
 When will the world have done with me,  
 And send me home to you?

The restless noises of the town,  
 Harsh and importunate,  
 Can never drown the memory  
 Of the whispering pines that wait.

Oh, will they really wait for me?  
 So long I am away!  
 Sometimes I fear the laggard years  
 May after all betray.

It would be very hard to die  
 Here in the dust and roar,  
 And never feel the cool, still woods  
 Around me any more!

ELSA BARKER.



## IN THE QUAKER CITY

"YOU visited some sporty people in Philadelphia, didn't you?"  
 "Yes."  
 "Have a good time?"  
 "No; I never could play ping-pong."



## AS THEY WHIZZED BY

FIRST AUTOMOBILIST—What do you think of that landscape?  
 SECOND AUTOMOBILIST—Which one?



MISERY loves company, but company does not love misery.

# A TELEPHONE EXCHANGE

By Inez Haynes Gillmore

KATHARINE watched John Knight as he said good-bye to his guests. He performed that function with more vivacity than was ordinarily characteristic of him. But then, his manner had been perfect the whole evening. What had come over sober, comfortable old John? she wondered. He had become suddenly so—so, what was it? *Comme il faut* was the expression she was seeking, she decided. He was, so much more than formerly, at his ease with women. Now, for instance, he was responding to the farewells of the bride, who had come to his dinner fresh from her honeymoon, with quite the right amount of courtly deference. He had treated the debutante with what almost amounted to religious awe, and for Mrs. Merrington, the white-haired chaperon of the affair, he had in reserve an apparently inexhaustible store of delicate raillery. What had brought it all about?

It had been a charming evening.

In the first place, the storm had made everybody late, and the embarrassment of each had been the merri-ment of all. The wild spirit of the night seemed to have inoculated them and they lingered at the table until the last pretext for prolonging the conversation had worn itself out. They were going even now, earlier than they wished, as the storm, serious enough in the early evening, had developed into a blizzard. They said good night slowly, exchanging during the process all kinds of banter in regard to the peril of the homeward journey, mixed with Christmas wishes, and the congratulations on her forthcoming mar-

riage that they showered on Katharine.

"I expect to have the best Christmas dinner of my life," Katharine flung into the group. "Meg's come on unexpectedly for it, you know."

It was several minutes before she and Mrs. Merrington were alone with their host. The latter took up her position near the window. From time to time she glanced out into the maelstrom of whirling sleet that had once been Washington Square.

"It's been very successful, John," she said. "It's pretty good bachelor housekeeping—isn't it, Katharine?"

"It's wonderful," Katharine admitted. "It frightens me to death. I hate to have him set such a pace for me. I sha'n't dare invite him to luncheon, even. Why, he didn't have roses on the table to conflict odorously with the courses. I thought men always did that."

"The chrysanthemums were lovely," Mrs. Merrington said. She gave Knight one of her sweet, sympathetic smiles. For an instant her glance shifted to Katharine. Then she looked out of the window, sighing.

Mrs. Merrington had always championed John, Katharine recalled amusedly. Doubtless she was regretting the present conditions. She could not deceive herself that Mrs. Merrington had ever liked Ellis. And sometimes—she felt it almost a disloyalty to analyze her impressions—but she had been vaguely conscious that Ellis's manner had been too *empresé*, whenever he had been with Mrs. Merrington, the uncrowned queen of their set. She was not really criticizing Ellis Duncan.

It all went, she pointed out to herself, with his wonderful temperament, its whole-souled enthusiasm, its quicksilver impulsiveness and spontaneity.

"I am sorry you must wait, Mrs. Merrington," John was saying, "but you see"—he pantomimed despair—"Polly has been ill, you know," he turned explainingly to Katharine. "I can't get Mrs. Merrington to admit it—but I know she's been worried all the evening."

"Oh, there's the carriage now," the lady in question burst out; "and—yes—here's your father, Katharine; I should know Richard's gait anywhere."

Katharine and John came over to the window and looked out.

"There he is, by the Garibaldi statue," John pointed out.

"Poor daddy!" the girl commented. "There must have been some mix-up about the carriages for him to be walking. He's having a hard time, isn't he? I'm afraid he won't save that umbrella. It is a night, isn't it?"

"It isn't often that you can't even see the Judson cross." John turned away.

"Do you mind, dear, if I run on now?" Mrs. Merrington asked eagerly. "I am a bit worried about Polly."

"Oh, please do go, stupid thing that I am. Why didn't I send you away before?"

"I shouldn't have gone." The older woman laughed and patted the other's face affectionately. But she slipped quickly into the cloak that Knight held for her. "I'm sorry you've such a distance, my dear."

"I can't fancy why dad's walking," the girl meditated perplexedly. "Oh, I know he's probably made some arrangement for the carriage to pick up Meg and then to call here."

She kissed Mrs. Merrington, listening dreamily, as she reseated herself on the couch, to the steady stream of her chatter to Knight as she went downstairs. The door opened and the wind screamed for a few minutes through the house. Then it shut and she heard John's steps bounding up the stairs.

He reappeared with a crimson face, his hair blown and his coat collar up.

"It's the wildest kind of night," he said, reseating himself beside the fireplace. "I was half afraid to let her go. I'm sorry she had to wait."

Katharine did not speak, and for a second the pause was eloquent. Neither the driving hail outside nor the crackling blaze could quite fill it.

"Well, Katharine!" he said at last.

"Well, John?" she answered, smiling.

"This is the prettiest Christmas gift I ever had—these few minutes alone with you. You don't know how nice it is to have you here."

"It's very nice to be here."

"I suppose everybody else wanted to give you your first dinner after—it was announced. But I wanted to give you your last." He looked musingly at her. "I don't know why I say 'last.'"

"I think it will be the last. There isn't much time left, you know."

Knight's musing glance had grown more keen, and he stared steadily at her. Katharine was not exactly a pretty girl. Her hair was parti-colored—gold or silver or brown—entirely at the mercy of the light that played without sparkle upon it. Her colorless face was too square and her pink mouth, defined by a deep dimple at each corner, too straight. But her long-lashed eyes danced with spirit and her head was poised at an angle of exquisite hauteur on a beautiful neck. John did not seem to be noting any of these things. It was more as if he were finding in her expression the confirmation of some unformulated theory.

"I have never believed that you'd marry Ellis," he said at last. "I don't believe it now. I can't."

"I'm afraid I do," she said gaily.

There was a liqueur decanter on a little table near. Knight poured himself out a thimbleful.

"Well, here's to him," he said. "Why wouldn't he come tonight?" he demanded sharply.

Katharine's face changed. "He had work," she responded simply.

"Katharine, I've always had a fancy that Ellis did me the honor of being jealous of me. Is that true?"

His companion's face flushed, but she raised her head quickly and stared directly at him. "Do you think I'd be likely to admit that, even if it were true?" she questioned spiritedly.

Knight laughed. "Foolish youngster!" he said indulgently.

"What has become of father?" Katharine asked. She arose and moved swiftly over to the window. That her question was merely put to cover her embarrassment was proven by the dismay that evoked and emphasized its instant repetition. "What has become of father?"

Knight came to her side. "There's a life-saving station just around the corner," he explained. "On a night like this it wouldn't be possible for anything human to get by it. He'll be here in a few moments." He pulled the couch over toward the fire. "Come and make yourself comfortable," he begged, "and don't worry about your father. You can't see anything now."

Katharine obeyed. "Doesn't it seem strange that this should be the first time that I have ever been in your rooms?" she asked.

"Yes. You can fancy how I'm draining these minutes to the dregs. I may never see you again as Katharine Linyard. Not that I believe that, as I said before."

"I'm afraid you won't, however." She looked about critically. "It's very manly and simple and comfortable."

"I have imagined you sitting on that couch so many hundreds of times—just as you are—in that nest of green cushions. In fact, it's my favorite air-castle when I smoke my going-to-bed pipe."

Katharine meditated. This would be embarrassing, especially in view of the circumstances, if it were anybody but John. Dear, quiet, comfy John! It was impossible to feel anything but the most serene surety when he was about. Somehow, tonight, he looked

almost handsome. She had never thought that John could be handsome. How well his big frame and massive face went with the bulky, simple things that furnished the house! There was a new expression on his face, too. He was so much more than formerly alert, alive, responsive.

"Katharine, you're not going to have the heart to tell me that I'm dreaming?" he concluded dispassionately.

She laughed. Then her face sobered. "John, I can't understand where father—there's the telephone, isn't it?"

John came back from the hall with a strange expression on his face. "It's your father," he said briefly.

"Father!" She stared at him. "Why, how in the world——?"

"He'll explain."

Katharine's expression was even stranger as she reëntered the big room. "What am I going to do?" she asked helplessly.

"You'll have to stay here a while, anyway. Now, don't worry, Katharine. Nobody's to blame, and there's nothing you can possibly do."

"He said that Meg had to stay overnight with the Wymans. Mike couldn't get back with the carriage. He took refuge in the nearest livery stable, and he's got to spend the night there. Father said that he'd called up every livery stable in the directory and not one of them would send a carriage after me."

"I've been wondering what the matter was for a quarter of an hour."

"He said that when Ellis got there—perhaps he—but I'm afraid he—" She clasped her hands despairingly. "Father said he battled as long as he could. He turned back at Thirty-fourth street. That couldn't have been he that we saw."

"No. I wonder how Mrs. Merrington fared."

"Father thought she was here, of course."

"What did he say?"

"He laughed."

"What did he say?"

Katharine blushed. "He called up Mrs. Merrington, though, and found out that she was all right."

"What did she say?"

"Oh, she made all kinds of apologies. She was charming about it. You know what a dear she is." She moved restlessly about the room, making as if to sit in the morris-chair.

"No—the couch, please," Knight commanded.

She snuggled into her lair among the sofa-cushions. It was still dimpled with the impress of her slender body.

"Where were you going to have Christmas dinner?" he asked.

"Oh, at home—we always do. It was to be especially nice—Meg on—and Ellis here." She fingered her handkerchief nervously and her face sobered. Suddenly she burst out laughing. "Did you ever hear of anything so ridiculous in your life?"

"I never heard anything so delicious."

"What were you going to do?"

"I was going to a hotel. I told my man and the maid they could go. They must have gone by this time."

She sat bolt upright. "Then so far as I can see—we're alone in this house! We'll have to get our own breakfast."

"*L'enfant dit vrai.*"

"What fun! Oh, there's the telephone again! I'll answer it."

He lingered only to hear her glad "Oh, Ellis!" Then he went downstairs. When he returned she was back in her station on the couch. He stooped to pile the fireplace with logs.

"Ellis says he'll come and take me away, if he dies for it."

John smiled discreetly into the mounting blaze. "Tell me how you would furnish these rooms if they were yours," he suggested.

Interior decoration, she informed him, was her specialty. She made scathing criticisms on the hanging of the pictures and the arrangement of the books. Their discussion of it kept drifting off to other things, apparently disconnected with it. In some inexplicable way an hour passed. Suddenly the telephone rang again.

"It's Ellis," Knight guessed tersely. He followed Katharine into the hall, but he continued down the stairs.

Katharine took up the receiver. "Oh, Ellis!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, couldn't you? . . . Oh, I'm so sorry! But I told you not to make such a desperate attempt! I hope you haven't caught cold. I shall have to stay here all night. . . . Oh, I'll be all right—Mr. Knight has been lovely about it. . . . Yes, in the parlor. . . . No, there's nobody in the house, not even the servants. They'd all gone when we discovered it, but it couldn't be helped. You don't suppose he planned it, do you? Perhaps you think he planned the storm, too! . . . Why, of course, presently. But I want to sit up. . . . Oh, books and interior decoration—and—and things like that. Why, of course! . . . Why, certainly not! Good gracious, Ellis! All right!"

"Would you like to go to bed?" Knight asked when she returned. "There's a room all ready for you."

"What time is it?"

"Two."

"Not yet." She nested, with a graceful impulse toward comfort, deep down among the couch-cushions. "Won't it be funny to come to breakfast in a blue chiffon evening-gown?"

"Is that chiffon? I thought it was woven moonshine."

"You're improving, John."

"Thank you."

"John?"

"Yes."

"Isn't it a lovely adventure?"

"I see that you believe it. I've almost convinced myself. Of course I haven't the courage to ask you to pinch me."

"John?"

"Yes."

"I never felt so romantic in my life."

"Did it ever occur to you, Katharine, that I have never really had a chance to talk alone with you all these years that I have been so intimate with your family. Nobody ever respected our tête-à-têtes. We were always being interrupted. I'm like one of those old



friends of the family that come into modern English comedies. Everybody loves him, but they treat him like furniture. Why, you don't know me at all!"

"How exciting! I'm going to get acquainted with you tonight."

"Well, it's about time—though a little late—from my point of view. There are a small billion of things—what do you call them?—thoughts, hopes, experiences, ambitions, ideas and ideals that I've never had a chance to tell you about."

"Tell me about them now."

"There's the telephone! It's Ellis."

Katharine's face looked sober as she took the receiver up.

"Yes, it's Ellis," she called. "Why, we're simply talking, Ellis, that's all. On perfectly ordinary subjects. . . . Oh, thoughts and ideals and ambitions and theories—and things like that. . . . But I don't want to go to bed. I feel like talking. . . . I certainly sha'n't until I feel like it. . . . Call people up! All night long! Why, they'd be bored to death! I couldn't think of a word to say after three minutes. . . . *Ellis!* Are you crazy? Why, of course I won't. What's the use of publishing the situation? No. Once and for all, no. I'll do as I please."

"Do you want to go to bed?" John taxed her on her return.

"No. I particularly want to stay up. Tell me about the ideals—and things."

"Presently. Katharine, do you remember that the last time I proposed to you I said that I should not consider that you had really refused me until you had actually married somebody else?"

"Yes, I remember."

"Don't forget it, will you?"

"Oh, no."

"Don't wait for me. Just announce our engagement to me—or anybody else—I'll act up."

"Oh, I'd prefer to put it in the papers and let you find it out that way. Now tell me about the ideals."

He told her. The recital was long,

but there were pleasant interpolations of question and comment and light laughter. Ultimately the telephone interrupted.

"It's Ellis," they said together, and Katharine trailed reluctantly out into the hall.

"Oh, Ellis! No, I haven't, because I didn't want to. . . . Why, talking, of course! Oh, on all sorts of subjects! . . . Not go to bed! Why, of course I shall. You don't want me to sleep under his roof! Ellis, have you lost your senses? *John!* Do you know whom you're talking about? Do you know whom you're talking to? . . . No—certainly not. Certainly I won't. I won't, I tell you, I won't. I won't listen any more, and I shall not answer the telephone again."

Her pale cheeks were blazing and her eyes glowed like blue flames when she reentered the room. But she talked for an hour longer, and in that hour many things were said. Finally she leaned back, tired out. "I guess I'll go to bed," she announced.

"It's five o'clock," John apprised her gently.

It was past noon when she awoke. She trailed down to the dining-room in her blue chiffon gown. Things were happening odorously in the kitchen near. Knight looked as if he had had his full complement of sleep.

"Good morning, Katharine. I've been dreaming that this was our honeymoon all night long."

"Is that a proposal? My grief—there's the telephone! Has it been going all night long, I wonder!"

She ran lightly back over the stairs. "It's Ellis," she called down. "Hullo! asleep—asleep—I said I'd been asleep. . . . I can't help it. . . . Fifty times? Really? Your patience is only equaled by your persistence. I said I didn't hear it. I don't know whether he heard it. Very likely he did. . . . I said probably he did. . . . No, he wouldn't have waked me up. Oh, no, indeed, we're having breakfast. Hadn't you better stop before you say

something you'll regret? What do you mean? Compromised! How dare you? Our engagement? It's broken now. Perhaps I didn't. I think you're quite right. I entirely agree with you. Certainly not. Never! Never! Never!"

She lingered to call up Mrs. Merrington. Then she went downstairs.

"Do you know that this is our Christmas dinner?" she asked him.

"You said last night that you expected it to be the happiest one of your life."

"It is," and she maintained it in the face of her own blushes. Casually she said: "I've just broken my engagement to Ellis——"

"Ah!"

"I called up Mrs. Merrington"—he looked up inquiringly—"to announce my engagement to you."



## HOW IT REALLY WAS

THE able editor of the Polkville (Ark.) *Weekly Clarion* was recently in receipt of the following unique communication from one of his out-of-town correspondents:

YAMHILL, ARK., July 15, 1905.

DEAR SIR:

I take my pen in hand to let you know that I just wisht it had 'a' been plucked from the wing of a cherrybim and dipped in a rainbow, that I might sorter have something with which to fittingly dee-scribe the marriage ceremony at the residence of Mrs. Harriett Slew, upon night before last. Just as the sun had withdrew his gorgis beams from earth and pressed a golden farewell kiss on the cloudless brow of evening—so to poetically express the thing—'twuz then that the sollum words were spoken by the Rev. Jerry Busenbark, binding together the hearts of Lester J. Pinney and Miss Hattie Mayme Slew in holy matrimony.

But, P.S. (as it were); that's the way I had writ it up in advance, with only a little help from a novel which is right smart of a favorite of mine, and prezisely the way it would 'a' happened if the groom hadn't turned up missing just when he was worst needed. A wedding don't amount to much without a groom, you know. Lester is as fine a young feller as you 'most ever seen, but he is so fetch-taked bashful that he mighty near sets his celluloid collar afire with his blushes every time he gets mixed up in a soshul gathering. It was blamed near ten o'clock of that same night before we found him, which was shortly after the Widow Pritchett returned home from som'ers where she'd been spending the evening, and got the impression that there was some sort of a varmint under her house, by reason of hearing him sneeze, and took and poured b'iling hot water down through a knot-hole in the floor, which I am pleased to say driv the groom—it being him—right out into the arms of his friends which had been searching 'most every place for him. Soon after that he was led to the altar and the happy couple were made one with neatness and despatch. He explained that when it came right slap-dab to a show-down he was so skeered that he couldn't help crawling into the first handy place of ree-fuge.

From this you can see why my first account of the wedding don't prezisely fit the case, so I am giving you the facts just as they happened, and leav-  
ing you to write 'em up as you see fit. No more at present from

Yours truly,

J. D. SOGBACK,

*Yamhill Correspondent.*

TOM P. MORGAN.

# A HURRIED APOLOGY

(WITH MENTAL RESERVATIONS)

By John O'Keefe

**D**EAREST:

Before you sail I must atone  
For what I said last night (harsh words but moral.)  
My foolish jealous phrases I disown.  
(I'm generous, for she began the quarrel.)  
You said that you were sailing with your aunt,  
(Just think! A chaperon of less than thirty!)  
To pass the spring in some Riviera haunt.  
(I know those places: Frenchy, foolish, flirty.)

I cautioned you (I'm sure I had the right  
Since she had on the solitaire I'd bought her)  
Against the steamer promenades at night.  
(Some gay young cubs are always on the water.)  
You seemed to think my words had meaning hid—  
That I had doubts you were a seraph snowy.  
I said I didn't. (Just the same, I did.)  
Then you cried, "Sir-r!" (That bass! 'Twas like May Yohe!)

I begged your pardon, you'll acknowledge that.  
(That's where I made an idiotic blunder:  
I should have put my foot down hard and flat.  
I'll bet in *that* case she'd have stood from under.)  
You scornfully replied you'd ne'er accept  
Apologies: you were no weak-kneed martyr.  
"Go!" you commanded. (Even as I crept  
I recognized your pose. Oh, Mrs. Carter!)

I heard your portal slam behind me hard.  
(A flat-house door, but t'other word sounds solemn.)  
I shivered like a soul from heaven barred.  
(The wind was blowing down my spinal column.)  
In that black moment sorrow's spring welled up  
And filled my eyes. (The night was growing wetter.)  
I felt that I had drained life's bitter cup.  
(The one I got a block away was better.)

I staggered homeward. (That's a truthful phrase.  
I tarried to brace up in divers places.)  
Woe's maelstrom madly whirled before my gaze  
Your face! (In fact, I saw a lot of faces.)

## THE SMART SET

Just how I reached my room I do not know.  
 (The porter does who forced me to await him.)  
 There on my couch, I saw before me grow  
 The wrongs that I had done you, seriatim.

I had been jealous; angry I had been;  
 Unkind of word when you, love, had been tender.  
 (If I keep up this sort of rubbing in  
 I'll come to think I *was* the sole offender.  
 Let's see: what other phrases can I use  
 So humble that her vanity I'll flatter?)  
 I am not worthy to unlace your shoes!  
 (She wears 'em buttoned, but that doesn't matter.)

Ah, love, I dare not face you at the boat.  
 (My hand is shaking and my nerve is scanty.)  
 'Tis better I should mail this pleading note.  
 (But where? I'd have to mark it "Poste restanty.")  
 If I should see you now, despite my pride  
 My love would bid me overlook your scorning.  
 (Oh, hang it all, I'll let this letter slide  
 And beg her pardon on the pier this morning.)



## A LOGICAL CONCLUSION

WIFE—I don't understand how it is that you sometimes show such masculine energy and again such feminine indecision.

HUSBAND—I suppose it's a matter of inheritance. You see, half of my ancestors were men and half were women.



## JUST SO

"PA, what are the wages of sin?"  
 "Well, the salaries of those trust officials vary greatly, my son."



## THE CONDITION

TOM—So the duke is about to humble his ancestral pride in the dust by marrying that rich brewer's daughter?

HARRY—Yes, if she will supply the dust.

# THE PERMANENT FOOL

By Maarten Maartens

THE Gatherbys were a peculiar family; not so peculiar but that, if you look round among your acquaintances, you will probably find a number like them. Just as, when some hitherto unheard of complaint distinguishes your home circle, all your friends come and tell you they have had it too.

Andrew Gatherby had been destined by his father, a lay preacher, for the Wesleyan ministry. But at the college his mind too resolutely turned to abstract philosophy. "I don't want to preach; I want to think," he told his disappointed parent, who could not see why the one should preclude the other. But it soon became evident to the professors that Andrew's thinking was leading him far astray from his primitive faith. Not that he was a contentious infidel or a ranter of any kind. All blatancy seemed equally repugnant to him. He was just simply an abstract and abstruse thinker, a man who wanted to be left alone with the great metaphysical mysteries and to find out where Hegel went wrong. He got a scholarship of some kind and went off to German universities, living cheaply and studying hard. He was absolutely devoid of humor; but perhaps he hardly needed that in his line of work. Only, the absence of it made him so portentous, as if he bore the fate of the universe on his little, stunted shoulders. They certainly sustained a world of knowledge; his big, round head never let anything go that he put into it, and he was putting something in all day. In one word, he was immensely learned; he knew he was, and he cared little for anything but learning.

All the same, he brought home a yellow-haired German girl as a wife. He had met her at Graz, where she was studying the oldest known forms of Egyptian, "so as to get at the bottom of things," she said. This charmed him; he loved and married her. After the publication of his well-known work on "Converse Homonyms in the Earliest Developments of Human Thought," an inquiry in which she naturally could afford him the greatest assistance, he was appointed to a chair at home. That was, of course, a very manifest success. It reconciled his proud father to a great deal that before had been rather unpalatable. "My son, the professor." "Professor Gatherby? Quite so; I am his father." Gatherby himself cared for none of these things. All he wanted was to sit where nobody could disturb him and think.

This did not, however, prevent his assuming the responsibility of a family of little Gatherbys. The German lady proved an excellent housewife and mother. There was nothing untidy or bluestocking about the domestic arrangements. In the grave and well-ordered circle all things went philosophically right. Also, there was a facilitating affluence, for the professor—by the merest fluke and to his own lasting amazement—had written a short text-book which had taken the fancy of the school authorities. It brought him in quite a handsome income in addition to the rather meager revenues of his chair.

The little Gatherbys—there were five of them, two boys and three girls—grew up in a consistent atmosphere of intellectual culture. From their earli-



est babyhood they were made to think, to find a reason for what they did and a better reason for doing something else. Mere beauty—the artistic side of refinement—was not reprehended; it was simply ignored. Mrs. Gatherby made her house comfortable and provided all good things in season; she would never have gone out of her way to “beautify the home”; had she done so, she might quite possibly have followed the advice of the advertisements and purchased cheap colored lithographs for the walls. But she did not even take that trouble for so vain an object; she took the advice of a first-rate and expensive London furnishing firm and requested them to provide her with “stuffs that would wear”; the pictures were excellent engravings of the “School of Athens” and that wholesome and instructive sort of thing. In the nursery, next to nurse’s transient “Bo-Peep” (from the illustrated Christmas numbers) and more such harmless and useless rubbish, hung portraits of Spinoza and Kant, so that the children might early become familiarized with the features of these great men; in the school-room, later on, a large placard was lifted up, “Remember that you will never live again!” To this statement grandpapa, the old lay preacher, ventured to object. It was the first and only subject of serious difference between him and his daughter-in-law. “Oh, of course,” said the lady with asperity, “if you are going to seek in it an attack on the future life, of which we know absolutely nothing, although even the earliest Egyptians so strongly believed in it, and I am not going to deny that there is a consensus—”

“Oh, my dear, my dear!” said the old preacher, and lifted up his trembling hands.

“What, father?” She stopped in surprise.

“My dear Elsa, there is no consensus,” replied the old man, who thought this must be some kind of “intermediate state.” “There is heaven and hell.”

“That is what the consensus goes to

prove, father,” put in the professor, flushing slightly, for, amiable man though he was, he had a little outgrown his parent, “if at least, in a world of fallacies, we can admit a consensus as proof.”

“I only wish,” put in Mrs. Gatherby eagerly, “I am most anxious to impress on the children the importance of time. I can weep when I think of the moments I frivolously wasted—in reading novels, for instance, and in discussing with other schoolgirls my brother’s male friends. What was the use of that? In the end, anyhow, I was to marry you, my dear.”

“It might tend to early discrimination,” replied the professor gravely.

“I will have it changed, if you really wish, father, to ‘*Pereunt et imputantur.*’ But it will be a great sorrow to me, for the discovery of that simple sentence in Vigilius, many years ago, marks a great epoch in my own mental development, and the man has charged me one pound fifteen to illuminate the letters and frame them, and I think it is very expensive.”

“All I ask, my dear, is that you do not take from these young hearts their sense of future responsibility—”

“But that practically leads to Buddhism. Or, if you like, to Pythagoras. If you look at these things consistently, father, you will see that you are really a disciple of Pythagoras.”

“God forbid!” said old Gatherby. “Who was Pythagoras?”

His grandchildren could all have told him, before they were fifteen. There was nothing extravagant about their education: they went to school or had a governess like other children. The governess had to be a splendidly gifted woman, who had taken university honors (on the practical, the mathematical and scientific side), and who received proportionate remuneration. But the home influence was different from that which their comrades underwent. Care of the body, games, gymnastics—these things were by no means wrong, but they were superfluous. You could take to them if you liked, but you might well do

something better. If you had to play cricket—play! Give unto Cæsar the worthless things that are Cæsar's. If you were feeling exhausted with honest mind-work, then take up a volume of really good poetry, as a recreation: "Hamlet," for instance, which contains much philosophic thought in an attractive form, or Goethe's *West-östlichen Divan*. The professor's own especial delight was "Sordello," which he discovered rather late in life, and which henceforth became to him an ant-heap, through which he endlessly burrowed as a beaver, and over which he skipped as a chamois. Only, however, when his brain, worn out by more serious work, was in need of rest. Those famous anonymous articles in the *Edinburgh* which explain sixty passages from "Sordello" to mean half a dozen different things, every one of them, neither more nor less, with the exactitude of a mathematical equation and the inevitableness of a theorem from Euclid—those much-praised articles were from the pen of Andrew Gatherby. He doesn't mind being mentioned as their author, though he was ashamed to publicly sign such trifles with his name. When you belong to half the learned academies in Europe, you must remember that your reputation is no longer private property. They were not a skit, however, as so many people thought, but a serious study in language and logic. Had the professor been able to discover a seventh meaning to any one of the passages, his whole theory would have broken down.

He could not have perpetrated a skit to save himself from the stake or—what he would have considered far more painful—the pillory. That was where the building up of the family broke down so. Neither father nor mother, nor the Girton governess, objected to any rational form of fun; only they couldn't see it. If they had been told that "a jest wouldn't enter their head, unless it were fired from a canon," they would have answered also: "But you can't fire a

jest from a cannon, can you?" And yet the accusation would have been but partly true. They could appreciate real wit, only it had to possess an intellectual quality beyond mere fun. The professoress liked some of Heine: the professor read—when he had a headache—Swift. But when Mrs. Gatherby found nurse doing "This little pig went to market," she said: "I have no objection, Atkins, but you must make Miss Ada *clearly* understand that her toes are not really pigs—they only, for the time being, represent them." And a boy who brought a little book called "Cockney Wit and Humor" was not invited again. *Punch*, the children, on attaining their thirteenth year, were allowed to see. In fact, it was regularly subscribed to—though Mrs. Gatherby rather grudged the expense—so that the logic of the humorous deductions of the better kind might be explained to them. What Andrew himself looked for in all his children with an almost passionate anxiety and yearning—the one thing that gave him a thrill when he thought of them—was intellectuality. Well, he had his desire. They were all of them intellectual, girls and boys. They were also good-looking, and quite nice and pleasant among themselves, though with a natural tendency to argue. They might say what they liked, and when they liked—only, "Think before you speak, dear!" "Are you quite sure you know what you meant, Jackie, by what you said just now?" Decidedly damping, but perhaps mercifully so, or the dinner-table might have developed into a cerebral pandemonium. As it was, they grew up thoughtful and sensible, watching each other for a (mental) slip.

When they had all more or less left their serious childhood behind them—the eldest may have been as much as twenty-four and the youngest about eighteen—the first noticeable misfortune befell them. It was one of the many that come suddenly and stay long. The professor's famous textbook was suddenly superseded by an-

other man's, greatly inferior but more superficial. The new work was, said the educational people, more in touch with the spirit of the times; it recognized the fact that even in philosophy two and two do not always make four. It proclaimed the great truth that the ego and the non-ego were because they were not. The professor's sales stopped net; but it was not the drop in his income he minded nearly so much as the blow to his prestige and, still far more than that, the injury to the thinking mind of England. The household, however, fell from its easy-going luxury to carefully husbanded content. The failing health of the mother proved unequal to the strain. Her death did not improve the rapidly souring—or, rather, let us say, saddening—temperament of the professor. The philosopher became a man with a grievance. He could not keep out of his conversation the decline of ratiocination in England. He told his children all about it, and his colleagues and a great many other people who wanted still less to hear. The children had their own work. The eldest son, Tom, had taken up his father's subjects with a difference; he was engrossed in the philosophized history of European liberty. Jackie studied geology and all sorts of other chemical compounds besides. Ada's heart was lost to the most transcendental mathematics; she felt in logarithms. I forget the name and occupation of the second daughter—I believe she mixed and unmixed Jackie's compounds. Millie, the youngest, having spent some time with clever German relations at Marburg, had come home with a mission for early German—more particularly the Nibelungenlied. She devoted herself entirely to this enormous subject, first Simrock's translation, then the original, and so on right down into the Nibelungen Saga, with Wagner as a holiday treat. They were otherwise not a musical family (although Andrew was always much interested in the attempt to reduce music to an exact mathematical science. "A sonata, properly read, is an equation"), but

Millie had in her an element of the romantic and a far stronger love than the others for the merely beautiful. The knightly legends and great moral issues suited her. Her blue eyes would flash and her fair brow would flush, as she pored over the fierce passions and hot woes of those epic times. Sometimes the flowers of their rhetoric would cause her to forget her slow search after the roots of their words.

On an evening, which turned out more momentous than anyone could have dreamt of, all the brothers and sisters were collected in their "study." Their father had just betaken himself to his own, after a vehement and yet wearisome harangue on Carlyle's "Mostly Fools." The unexpected starting-point of this discourse had been the new, cheap cook, third or fourth of the series which had been inaugurated when the old, expensive one was sent away. Thus cooks, the reading public and the teachers of the young idea mingled in a not unreasonable hotch-potch of imbecility. When the door closed sharply—had Andrew Gatherby not been a philosopher of worldwide fame, we should have said "banged"—the sons and daughters looked at each other. They were uncomfortable.

Thomas yawned, an enormous, spreading yawn.

"How dull you all are," said Millie.

"I think father is unreasonable," remarked Ada, the mathematician.

A shudder ran through them all. It was as if somebody, in the house of Cæsar, had stated that Cæsar's wife was at the Roman "Empire," dancing the cakewalk.

"Don't be silly," said Jackie. Now that was the rudest thing one Gatherby could say to another.

Suddenly Millie burst out: "I wish she was!"

"Were," said one of them. The others only thought it.

"What on earth do you mean?" demanded Millie's chum, Jackie—"John" with his father.

"Why, don't you all see it's *that* we need! If we're all as glum as glum

can be nowadays, it's because we *can't* be silly! We don't know how!"

"You seem learning," said Tom.

She ignored him. "What we want in this family, to make life worth living, is a permanent fool!" she said. They all cried out at her. She hurried on, her cheeks burning: "I mean what I say. A jester to lighten up the tragedy, for it *is* a tragedy, and the cleverer you are, the more you see it is! We want somebody who can laugh, and talk without thinking and be downright silly. Oh-h!" She gave a great gasp. "What a rest it would be to our nerves!" She stood by the table looking quite charming, her hands clasped, her hot eyes lifted up.

"Why don't you try?" said jeering Tom.

"Because I can't," she answered in an eager voice. "I haven't been taught. I don't know how."

"By Jove, she's right," cried Jackie.

"Well, we haven't got that sort of thing at hand," reasoned Ada, "and you can't order it in from the stores."

"I don't see that it mightn't be procured," said Millie thoughtfully.

"How?" cried they all.

"A paying guest?" suggested the second sister.

"Oh," exclaimed Millie, "I think that would be downright mean!" She refused to explain herself further, but she held, in the course of the following two days, a series of elaborate confabulations with Jackie.

At the end of that week an advertisement appeared in a couple of rather frivolous London papers, the electrolysis and portrait-of-youngest-competitor kind:

Strictly confidential. Wanted in a highly intellectual family, in a university town, a visitor, non-paying guest, preferably a lady. Must be bright and amusing, humorous, not intellectual, no university education, no Oxford and Cambridge Locals, no Extension. Small remuneration, if desired. Highest references given and required. Write, *stating favorite novelist*, to "Trinculo," care of Warrick's Adt. Agency, Strand.

None of the dreaded complications intervened. No funny paragraphist took up the advertisement. Nobody forwarded it to *Punch*. A letter ar-

rived almost immediately soliciting an interview. The writer signed "Frances Wheeler." The favorite novelist was Mark Twain.

"She can't be quite a fool," said Millie, "if Mark Twain is her favorite novelist."

"Don't be illogical," replied Jack. "If she's to be amusing her favorite novelist must be a humorist, and there never yet was a humorist that was a fool."

"Shall we tell them first or first have the interview?"

"Oh, first the interview. A hundred to one it'll come to nothing."

"But—if father objects——"

"He won't object. You'll say she's a college friend of yours, a friend—let me see—made in Germany."

Millie sat down suddenly. "Goodness me, Jackie, if you do that again we needn't have a stranger at all."

"Do what?"

"Why, you almost made a sort of pun!"

"Did I? What was it?"

"Oh, never mind! It wasn't a pun exactly. Well, I can't go up to London. We must ask her to come here when father's up and we know the others are out."

This was not difficult to manage. The others were constantly out at fixed hours. One foggy November afternoon, then, a most dismal day, the applicant appeared.

"Oh, I say, this isn't fair," exclaimed Jackie. "We thought you were a lady!"

"The advertisement only said, 'Lady preferred,'" replied Francis Wheeler demurely.

"Well, but——"

"In every other way it seemed to me I was peculiarly eligible."

"You think you're amusing?" cried Jackie.

From Millie: "Oh, Jackie, hush!"

"My friends have often found me so," replied the imperturbable Francis, "when I least expected it."

"Not intellectual?"

"I haven't the faintest conception what you mean by the word."



"Why, Millie, I believe he'll do."

"But how do you know that we'll do?" questioned Millie timidly.

"That's *his* lookout."

"I might try for a fortnight," interjected Francis, "and see whether I give satisfaction. I don't want references from you; I think you'll be satisfied with mine. Is it a bargain?"

"The—the"—Millie jogged Jack's elbow—"remuneration?"

"A penny a pun," came the prompt response.

"You make puns? Oh, I'm sure you'll do," cried Jackie.

Mr. Wheeler bowed; by the bye, he was about twenty-seven, very quietly dressed, dark and gentlemanly looking. "There is one fact," he began, "I—I fear I must mention. Those Oxford and Cambridge Locals——"

"No, you didn't?" cried Jackie.

"Plucked," said Mr. Wheeler. The others gave a little sob of relief.

"I was a mere child," added Mr. Wheeler, in a conciliatory tone. "But—but, there is one other fact—that University Extension——"

"No?" cried Jackie.

"I only went to one lecture, and I fell asleep. I snored so they—they requested me to leave."

"Well," said Jack, "at any rate, you've never been to the university!"

"I—I fear I must plead guilty up to a point! But I beseech you, don't let that invalidate me! I had to leave, for I couldn't manage my Little Go!"

Jack burst into a shout of laughter. "He'll do, Millie!" he cried, "he'll do splendid! He couldn't manage his Little Go!" Mr. Wheeler also laughed heartily. And so the whole thing was soon arranged.

"It's really far simpler, having a man," said Jack, "for we can introduce him as a friend of mine."

As such, then—as a chum of Jack's, an acquaintance made at a London club—he was foisted on the unconscious family. The two conspirators resolved to keep their secret. They had grown afraid of revealing it. And yet they knew that they had taken the only way to secure the new element they

wanted. They could never have drawn it from their own intellectual acquaintance, their city, their university, the circle congruous with themselves.

The others, in their fagged and dejected condition, gratefully accepted the change of air. A waft of London stories, brightly told, passed through the conversation, like a breeze.

"That reminds me," said the professor one day, suddenly cheering up, "of Swift in the Drapier's Letters——"

It appeared that Mr. Wheeler had never heard of Swift. "Oh, yes, of course, now he came to think of it! Gulliver! He had read Gulliver—very funny—as a child." He openly admired the professor; he told him various anecdotes illustrative of recent want of logic in high places. "We live," he said, "in an age of mental anarchy." The professor agreed. Then he—Wheeler—talked a lot of brilliant nonsense about two and two not making four nowadays, but five. His forte was the accurate paradox, the witty *reductio ad absurdum*, the very sort of froth the professor would appreciate. But he would soon glance away from that to tell simply funny stories—most of them were recent; however, the oldest chestnut would have seemed fresh to these hearers. And when he made his first pun——

When he made his first pun the professor half-rose precipitately from his chair, as if he were going to be taken ill. Then the poor man sank down solemnly and Jack and Millie breathed again.

"I'm very sorry," said the culprit to Millie afterward, meeting her alone. He had a knack of meeting her. "I'm very sorry. But I felt I really must earn my first remuneration, you know."

"Well, you've got your fool," said the others to Millie, neither gratefully nor graciously; "you've got him quite simply and naturally. You ought to feel much indebted to Jack."

"You others laugh enough!" she replied with acerbity. "He's brightened up the whole house."

But when, a day or two later, at table he said, "Talking of bulls, I have



just realized that the bul-bul is the male of the coo-coo," the professor stopped him. "You are surely mistaken," said the professor; "I have always understood bul-bul to be the Persian for the nightingale, the *male* nightingale, and in the poetry of that much over-rated pseudo-philosopher, Omar Khayyam——"

"I am sure you are right," said Francis Wheeler gravely.

"I fear you would do better to abandon the puns," Millie ventured to say to him afterward. They were alone in the drawing-room. Her manner was very nervous.

"Now, that is exceedingly cruel of you! I started this one on purpose because it raises the very interesting question between you and me, whether it is threepence or only a halfpenny—three puns or only half a pun."

Her lip trembled. "Now you are laughing at me."

"Not at you. To you. Isn't that what I am here for?"

"Oh, don't say that!"

"Of course I am. I have my board and lodging free, on condition that I amuse—I beg pardon—divert the family."

"No, no—you are putting it quite wrong!"

"Excuse me—I am here to play the fool."

"No, no, again! To cheer us up, if you like—to make us all feel brighter, happier!" She spoke with checked vehemence.

"And you really feel brighter, happier since I came?" His voice changed.

"I am sure they do."

"I didn't say 'they'; I said 'you'!"

She gazed into the fire. "Do you know," she said diplomatically, "I don't think I ever was quite so depressed as the others. My studies, for one thing, are lighter. It is a beautiful world, my Nibelungen world, a cloud-land of knights and dragons. Jack burrows underground, poor dear! and his chemicals *do* smell so bad."

"But it was you put in the advertisement," he said quickly.

"It was."

"Out of pity for the others, I suppose. Altruism."

"You are merciless," she answered; "no, I was quite ready myself for the joke. But I hadn't bargained for unlimited puns."

"Fourpence at the outside," he protested. "Forgive my mentioning the indelicate subject, but how am I to make the thing pay? You don't imagine, surely, that I want to say the beastly things? A sense of duty in earning my livelihood—" Their eyes met, and they both burst out laughing.

"Well, it's been an awfully nice time," he said; "I suppose it's nearly over."

"Your trial fortnight ends tomorrow. Aren't you going to renew?"

"I'm afraid I hardly give satisfaction. Your father is most kind, but Mr. Tom scowled at me this afternoon when I told that rude story about the university don."

"It was a very rude story."

"But I thought I was here to laugh at dons!" His air was piteous; his eyes were rigidly downcast.

"You are here to work with Jack. That's what my father thinks, as you know. There isn't any reason why you shouldn't work—just a little—longer."

"But Tom and your sisters know better. They found us out——"

"No—no—no! They know nothing about the advertisement."

He slightly shrugged his shoulders. "They've found us out, all the same. They know what I'm here for."

She stood irresolute. Then she burst out: "Oh, it's hateful! hateful! It's a shame. Yes, yes, you must go, the sooner the better! I can't bear to think of it. It was only a joke, but how can you ever forgive me? Your position here is odious. I want you to go!" She covered her face with her hands.

For a moment he seemed to find some difficulty in replying. "Why? You wanted somebody you could all laugh at? And you've got him. Do you know, I think, if you'll let me, I'll stay a bit."

"No—no. You must go. You

don't know— Oh, I hate to hear them—you don't know what they call you."

"I can easily guess—The Fool."

"You must forgive me, if you can, and leave tomorrow."

"I wish I could flatter myself I had not got the name complete. I—I fancied, yesterday—I heard—oh, here goes!—I heard myself most humorously spoken of as 'Millie's Fool.'"

She broke out crying. "Oh, I can't stand this," he said. "It is I that have got to confess to shameful behavior. I came here under false pretenses. During our first interview I told a fearful number of lies."

She looked up, a little alarmed.

"I am afraid that I must make a clean breast of it. I am a member of Cambridge University."

A pause.

"A Fellow of Trinity."

A silence.

"At one time almost a Don."

A longer silence.

"At all times a humble worker in the same sort of fields as yourselves."

Then she spoke. "Yes, that was a shame."

"There is worse to follow. Your advertisement, on which I lighted by the merest chance, in a waiting-room, struck some chord of sympathy. I couldn't let it alone. I fought against the feeling, but I simply had to find out who these weary intellectuals were, that were looking for a fool——"

"Don't——"

"Your brother's letter binding me

down to the most fearful secrecy was another inducement. When, at last, I was permitted to find out who you were, well—the thing was done." He stood watching her.

"But I fear I must plead guilty to far greater dissimulation than yours. I introduced myself under a false name."

"What is your name, then?"

She cried out when he gave it. To-day it is quite famous; at that time its bearer was beginning to be recognized as an archeologist and Greek explorer of great promise.

"I had to get my 'references,' my intimate friends, to see the joke," he added humbly. "They were very slow about it. But I have been sufficiently punished. I have lived in hourly fear of detection, though the chances up here were really small. I have been away from England so much. Well, I suppose, as you say, it had better come to an end." He sighed. "It has been a delightful fortnight. Next spring I go to Delos, to work, for a couple of years."

They both remained busy with their thoughts.

"If at any time," he said softly, "you imagined there might be a chance for a fellow—to obtain an appointment—as your own private, permanent fool——?"

"I—I couldn't advertise," she whispered.

"If the post is still open, I apply," he said.



## IT SOMETIMES HAPPENS SO

**FRIEND** (*returned from abroad*)—Tell me all the news. Is Stickem still paying devoted attention to your sister?

**ARLINGTON**—On the contrary, he's paying her no attention at all.

"You don't mean to say that he jilted her?"

"No; he married her."

# “THE ANGEL OF THE DARKER DRINK”

By Beatrix Demarest Lloyd

ONE would have thought that at the christening of Richard Quaintance the old order of fairy godmothers had been reversed, and that his sponsors in baptism had come with curses instead of blessings—giving him red hair, a face that freckled, a mouth no one could take seriously, and an awkwardness of body destined to make him famous; and that one old witch-woman, not content with her sisters' efforts at handicapping the poor creature for his friendly competitive race with his fellow-men, and wishing to have him nothing short of hobbled, had bestowed upon him an elaborate impediment of speech. But—and here the order of reversal still holds good—that one, who had forced her way in uninvited, after her grim relatives had done their worst, had made it all as naught by conferring upon him the love of men.

“R-r-richard K-k-quaintance,” as he had invariably to call himself, was to the world in which he moved a joy forever if not strictly a thing of beauty. Men forgave him his cravats, women their mutilated frounces. Even when he overset a cup of tea into “Berry” Chalmers's white broadcloth she had not an unkind word to say of him. For he was so overwhelmingly aware of his aggressive awkwardness that the very hardest heart in the world could not bring itself to add to the burden of his contrition.

He could ride like Diomed, swim as any Leander, track a quarry through the forest with all the noiseless cunning of Chingachgook, but in the presence of feminine furbelows and social complications he became the veriest Trad-

dles. Dance? He could scarcely cross a ballroom floor at a leisurely pace in quest of somebody's supper without coming to grief and confusion.

His uncle, with whom he lived and whose heir he was enviously acknowledged to be, had weeded out thoroughly from his household plot, so Richard was wont to declare, every article of furniture and adornment that was tip-pable and crushable, and had gone to the length, in Richard's imagination, of having some of the more ponderous remnants of his luxury securely bolted to the floor. They lived, not after the manner of the usual bachelor of the overcrowded city, in a comparatively large house on Madison avenue, a house that had sheltered five generations of the family. And it was here they gave their dinners—those well-known “Quaintance dinners,” where every woman sighed with envy over the silver service, and every man drank the breath of his wine as if each glassful were a crimson rose.

Old Mr. Quaintance, as Richard's feminine friends called the man of sixty, was as much the opposite of his nephew as it is wise for a friend to be. He was small, white-haired and punctilious, and his perfected code of regulations was frequently much disordered by Richard and his blunderings. Yet, though all the world dubbed the young man a “ripping good sort” and a “dear duffer,” no one knew quite so well as his little white-haired uncle what a clean, manly, straightforward, tender, faithful heart the fellow had. And up to a very recent date he would have said it was a merry heart as well, a jolly, sunny southern-exposure kind of heart, in

spite of all the chilling contrition it had had to shelter during its possessor's career of demolition. Lately, for a couple of months and possibly more, there had been a look on Richard's face, a gradually deepening shadow of distress, not even now perhaps dark enough for the general eye to perceive, but very plain, indeed, to the keen and yet keener eyes of the older man.

These two were absurdly fond of each other. They were to be seen together the greater part of the time, going down to the same offices of a morning, where, to all appearances, they struggled to see which of the two could do the less work, sitting usually together in the lower Delmonico's at luncheon, riding together in the early afternoon as far as Washington Square, from there to begin their daily stroll up the Avenue to the Union Club, and going home together to dress for the evening.

The walk up Fifth avenue had become so much a matter of course that sometimes one or the other would find himself in the midst of it without much recollection of the mechanical preliminaries. But on one particular day in April, the elder man, who had been watching his companion with surreptitious anxiety—Richard was staring out of the window with lightless eyes—tossed away his cold cigarette, and rose suddenly with an emphatic, "Out you go!" As Richard looked around, Quaintance touched the call-button on his desk. "I know it's early to leave, but it seems to me little short of insane to sit here doing nothing when out there is the all-important quickening of spring waiting for us to approve the proposed changes."

Richard smiled indulgently and made no answer.

The other, in a way characteristic of him, made a little trivial movement to turn away and then sharply flung back to explode with his feeling. "I'll tell you what it is, Richard Quaintance," he said forcibly, "I've been watching you for a month or more, and I'll be kept in after school if I don't think you are incubating some kind of an illness! You are silent, you are glum, you are

devilishly depressed and unlike yourself, that is what you are."

Richard closed his desk as he rose. "Th-ther's nothing the m-m-matter with me at all," he said.

"You needn't tell me to mind my own business, Dick. Confound that boy—where is he?" He rang again. "I may be a meddlesome old nuisance, but I'm not going to be told about it! When I take the liberty to say I can see there is something the matter with you it is because I feel I have earned the right to your confidence. William," as the boy entered, "get our hats. And if anybody asks for me, tell him I have gone out on important business connected with the crocuses in Broadway."

As the boy went out grinning, Quaintance came nearer his nephew and laid both hands on the shoulders so far above his own. "Dick," said he, his head a bit to one side, "if you are in love"—he paused as if the idea were almost a surprise to himself and quite too tremendous to be comprehended easily—"if you are in love tell her so and get it off your mind."

Richard smiled again. "I'd l-l-look well conf-f-fessing a k-k-consuming passion, w-wouldn't I?" The sharp eyes of Heber Quaintance detected some bitterness in the smile, the ears of Heber Quaintance some bitterness in the tone.

"The woman who wouldn't have you, Dick," he said slowly, "is not worth the gunny-sacking to sew her up in."

William came in at the moment with their out-of-door paraphernalia. Quaintance fell back a little, but with his eyes still on Richard's face. "If it is anything that you can tell me," he said very quietly, "I shall hope to hear it as we walk along."

Outside in the very streets of grinding toil there was the delicious airy presence of the spring. Far overhead, cut by the towering rows of buildings into long ribbon-like vistas, the clean blue of a nicely washed heaven hung serenely. The air was full of sudden winning whispers, impertinent flicks,

and gentle, fleeting kisses. The grass in Trinity Yard was flushed with a green that fairly tingled from the old earth's veins. The mysterious, subtle madness of the impulsive season, rich in temptation, demure in appearance and intoxicating in exhilaration, was abroad in the land. Men on the curb had begun to tilt their hats back. Even old Martha, who sold apples and newspapers at the corner, felt it, though perhaps in a different way, and she bobbed and smiled at "them two rich Quaintances" as they waited near her for a car.

"Fine day, Martha," said the older man.

"Sure and you may say that!" she cried. "'Tis the blessed time of year when folks is nayther dyin' for want of coal nor dyin' for want of ice!"

Richard turned to him. "There are g-g-g-grim synonyms for winter and summer, Uncle Heber."

Quaintance waved an irresponsible hand. "I refuse to entertain any of your depressing notions," he said. "I may have brought you out to walk them out of you: I certainly do not intend to have them talked into me."

Perhaps it was with a distinct purpose that he kept silent, attentively silent, as later, disembarking from the car, they swung into step together crossing the square. Richard was silent too—but not discouraging. Indeed, Quaintance felt distinctly the intention and impulse of the younger man to break down the barrier of his reserve. And so he waited with a good grace. Moreover, he could cheerfully have walked the same walk every day of his life, in silence and alone, for to him it was full of suggestion and interest and quaintness. The slanting wall of a building, which meant nothing to the majority of those who passed by, was to him the indelible impress of the old Union Road. The apparently neglected area fenced in the side yard of an old-fashioned brick house he knew, as few did, was the lasting memorial to an old quarrel forever unsettled. Whereas the great surging throng of men and women hurriedly crossed and

recrossed an unnoticed block of pavement, he would linger looking eastward as if to follow the trail of the brook long since buried far beneath.

As they neared the thirties, the crowd began to thicken with acquaintances and friends. Daintily perfected women smiled at them from victorias, or nodded gaily with bright color in their cheeks as they met in the procession.

Everywhere one could see a new buoyancy in the step of the multitude, a new brilliancy of color, a lighter glad-someness. Men who scorned the fashion found themselves wearing a flower, caught themselves staring, almost smiling, at the fresh beauty of the women.

Suddenly Richard's shoulders went back with a jerk. Quaintance looked forward keenly.

A tall girl with a sweet, rare face was coming toward them. She walked easefully, yet a bit disdainfully. The breeze fluttered her hair as it lay loosely upon her forehead, and rippled the white plume on her hat. It may have been the same agent that made her color deepen, as Quaintance noticed that it did, at the moment when she recognized them.

"Of course you are coming to-night?" she cried lightly as she passed them.

"Ind-deed, yes," said Richard, smiling, hat in hand.

There was an instant's pause after she had gone by. Then as if the sight of her had given him courage, Richard began to speak. "You have earned the right to my c-c-confidence, and yet that is n-not why I g-g-give it. It is my wish that y-you should n-n-know. I have wanted to t-t-tell you, but somehow it n-never happened to c-come around that way. You w-were partially right—I am what you call 'in love,' b-but that is not what has m-made me rather d-d-down of late. N-nora St. John, whom we just p-passed—I love her. D-d-does it surp-prise you?"

Quaintance was somewhat emphatic. "It does not!"



Richard almost smiled although his face was very grave. "Of course it d-doesn't," he went on. "Everybody that sees her l-loves her, I'm sure. There's something ab-bout her unlike other w-women."

Quaintance, in silent acquiescence, remembered he had himself discovered the same unique quality in women when he was young. But he could see, even with older and less illusioned eyes, that Richard was right. Nora St. John was sweet and rare, like some adorable flowers with a never-cloying fragrance.

"You adv-vised me to tell her and g-g-get it off my mind. If for no other reason than that I d-d-don't want it anywh-where but *on* my mind, I think I shall not t-tell her. Why should I? It w-would only make her feel badly f-for me, you n-know—I'm not such a f-f-fool as to l-look upon the p-prospect of her caring for me as anything but abs-surd."

"Nonsense!" Quaintance exploded indignantly. But Richard laid his hand briefly on his arm. "D-d-don't you interrupt," he said. "The chances are y-you'll never g-get me to talk ab-bout this ag-gain, so don't spoil it. I repeat, it w-would be absurd to th-think of a dainty embodiment of g-grace like N-nora caring for a c-clumsy beggar like me. What would she d-do with a stam-mering, stumbling, red-headed idiot in her train? Nonsense, truly!"

"Mrs. Godkin to the right," interjected Quaintance.

Richard obediently bowed. "There has been a 'f-foreign devil' around here this w-w-winter," he went on, after this momentary interruption. "You have met him—Terrannora. He's a damned little It-t-talian duke."

"Yes, I have met him."

"His mother was J-j——"

"I know, Jeanie Snyder, with some soapy millions."

"Ex-z-zactly. So Terrannora has all the money he needs, and the title and the position. But the American public are willing to f-furnish him

with more of all th-three. And American m-mothers are willing to th-throw in a duchess as well."

"Is Mrs. St. John willing to provide a duchess for his grace?"

"She is."

"And is that what distresses you?"

Richard swept a circle with his stick, impatiently. "N-n-not in the least," he answered. "Why sh-should I not wish N-nora to have all the honors the w-world can p-pay?"

"Then what——?"

Richard brought it out with a sudden fierceness. "I want her to be happy as well. I want her to n-n-know what love is. I d-don't want her to deg-g-grade herself through any g-girlish ig-gnorance. And I know she doesn't care for him!"

Quaintance stole a look at the set, almost angry face. "How do you know that?"

"I d-don't know how. I d-do know it, I feel it, I am sure of it." And thereupon Richard fell into his threatened silence, grimly, and it remained unbroken, save for perfunctory greetings, to the very end of their walk.

When they reached the club the graven image in the black skull-cap at the door became for the moment sufficiently articulate to inform them that two gentlemen who were most anxious to see Mr. Quaintance were waiting in the reception-room, that he had taken the liberty to say Mr. Quaintance rarely let the day go by without his afternoon hour at the club, and that he hoped he had not been mistaken in assuming that Mr. Quaintance would have wished them to remain.

Quaintance merely nodded in amiable acquiescence as he went toward the door at the left, with Richard lagging at his heels. Richard's inability to express his pleasure in meeting new people had rather destroyed the pleasure itself.

Two fairly young men, with deeply bronzed faces, were sitting within, in unattached and alien stiffness, a very apparent naïve interest in the doings about them sufficient to bespeak the stranger, and yet enough poise to sug-

gest a natural familiarity with such surroundings.

"I wonder who the deuce—" said Heber Quaintance to himself, as audibly he questioned. "You wanted to see me—Mr. Quaintance?"

The brown fellows rose with a lithe quickness and came forward. "Yes—yes, indeed," said the foremost. "We're the Raymonds—Reeve Raymond's sons, you know. We thought——"

Quaintance had flung a hand to each. "God bless my soul! Reeve Raymond's boys!" he said.

They shook the hands heartily, unaffectedly, laughing a little for pleasure in the welcome of his tone and action. Quaintance, looking from one to the other, saw that the two were very much alike, of the same stalwart build, with the same gray eyes, the same sun-bleached hair; and as they smiled, the same white, flashing teeth. "God bless my soul—Reeve Raymond!" he said again.

"It's good of you, this!" said one of them. "We could not go on without looking you up. The governor used to talk about you to us."

"Did he?" said Quaintance, almost tenderly.

"Oh, yes, always. About your larks, and about the time when you were both suspended, and——"

Quaintance interrupted with a laugh. "How very indiscreet!" said he. "Now I have never told my nephew anything about my scandalous and early life. This is he, Richard Quaintance, the only son I have. And you're Reeve Raymond's boys! I declare I can't quite believe it."

"I'm g-g-glad to meet you," said Richard, his voice far more reluctant than his hand and smile. "My father knew your father, too, I th-think."

"Of course!" said Quaintance. "We were all as thick as thieves forty years ago. Forty!"

"We certainly can't believe that!" said Reeve Raymond, smiling.

It was no half-hearted welcome Quaintance gave them. He took them about in the club, introducing friends and furnishing good cheer, and when

the regular hour for his departure came he left them at the door of their hotel only on condition that they come to dinner.

The two Raymonds looked at each other. "We should be only too delighted, I am sure," they said in a breath. "We are in town only this one night, you know," said Reeve. "We are off tomorrow, in quest of our treasure. If we dine with you you'll be bored to death, I am afraid, for you can see that we cannot talk of anything but that!"

"You will f-find us eager l-l-listeners," said Richard. "Al-r-ready you have me l-longing to go with you."

Liddon came down again a step or two nearer. "Why don't you come?" he said seriously. But Richard only laughed.

It was quite true that the Raymonds seemed unable to divert their minds for any appreciable time from their project, and it was also true that neither of their hosts wearied of the unceasingly enthralling story.

When they met again for dinner Quaintance made them welcome and familiar with his house. It amused him to see how instinctively their eyes dwelt upon the things germane to their interests, and that nothing impressed them as deeply as his collection of swords and knives. He pointed out to them what looked like a mat of withered rushes hanging among the stranger weapons. "It is a kuna-shield," he said; "your father gave it me."

"No, did he, really?" cried Reeve, springing lightly upon a chair to see it more closely. "Think of that, Liddon! How it brings him among us, doesn't it? Did he give you the ghoorki, too?" He peered along the wall in search of it.

"He gave me nothing that I know by any such name," said Quaintance.

Reeve leaped down. "It's a long knife," he said; "a horrid thing. They throw them so, with a dragging upward curve." He bent his body sideways, swinging his arm wide, with a sudden murderous twist in the forearm. "I saw a man once who had

been—yes, good God—you can't imagine! I'll bring you one when I come back, shall I? Your collection isn't complete without it. Just fancy," he looked at both the men who had never known the kind, "a tribe of creatures to whom no appeal of weakness, sex, numbers, fair play is comprehensible! One feels so utterly lost."

Quaintance had linked his arm through Reeve's and was drawing him toward the dining-room. "Have you been at this kind of thing all your lives, you two?"

"Ever since the governor thought us old enough!" Reeve answered, laughing.

All through dinner they talked of little else—old mines, new mines, reported mines, fake explorers, cheating partners, uprisings, conflicts, escapes, battle, murder and sudden death. Theirs was a story of enormous fortunes and enormous losses, of slow progressions through dense African and forbidden country, hideous, waterless marches when the blacks went with them only because they knew what kind of venom those little steel persuaders could spit into their brains. There were chapters, too, of frantic excitement, of dazzling finds, of jubilant merrymaking. There was the story of the revolt of Jimna and Reeve's attempted abduction; the pitiful tale of wholesale desertion when father and sons lay ill, and when Raymond had crept back to habitation dying with two dying boys roped upon his back; the story of black-skinned Metao, who had given her life to save their father's; the long, thrilling narrative of the desperate march to the coast again protecting the treasure from the lawless blacks. Reeve and Liddon told the story well, though at that chapter their voices ceased and Reeve's color rose with the effort he made to control his voice as he explained the break in the narrative with the simple words, "That, you know, was when we lost the governor."

When even coffee and cognac had lost their interest, they adjourned to the library, and it was here that Rich-

ard left them, as the hour drew near to eleven, still deep in the subject. "I wish I c-could shut you all up till I g-g-get back. I don't w-want to m-m-miss a word of it."

Liddon looked up from the map over which they were all bending, and laughed. "I'll take you with me yet!" he said; but Richard only smiled again. Liddon's eyes went back eagerly to the map. "Now, let me see where—oh, yes, here. We go in about here—Livingstone Falls you see there; of course the map is wrong—Babwende is really more so. We follow the Nkenke, then up so; the mine I told you about is about two hundred and fifty miles northwest of this—"

Richard groaned and went out, shutting away the alluring voice. After all, that was the kind of life he was fitted for: a hard, venturesome battle with primitive conditions, a life without the presence of Dresden china and Mechlin lace. His mind dwelt upon it as he walked along toward the St. Johns'. He would enjoy the bare, essential existence, the unadorned hardship, the struggle of it, the danger of it, the hope of it. Raymond had not spared the disagreeable details, the irksome days, the privations, the despair. But even its graphic discouragements had not turned Richard's thoughts from its invitation. What a sensation would it not be, suddenly, at a bound, tomorrow, to leave the petted and confined life of the townsman, and suddenly to plunge into the appalling immensity of that great continent of mystery and terror!

But—how the whole fabric of the nomad's desire melted in the mere breath of her name—"Nora!" He was within sight of the festive illumination of her home as he said the word. To what far country should he go in search of such despair, such hope, such privation, such dazzling happiness, as he might experience in the very sound of this name—"Nora!" It brought her face vividly before him, the waving, loosely drawn hair, the sweet, clear eyes, the wine-red lips. He fairly ran up the steps of the house, as it came to

him afresh, that she was there inside, that he might for a little while see her and hear her and be close to her. Ah, not for him, any spot on earth but that one, fair, radiant and most blessed place that sheltered her!

Nora, on this night, was not quite so brilliantly lovely as was her wont. Her mother, looking at her, decided that the gown she was wearing was not becoming. Her father, in the brief moment she had spent with him in his study before going down, had asked her anxiously if she were not too tired of it all. Nora herself knew better, that it was neither the gown nor the long wearisome season that had taken the sparkle from her eyes and the lilt from her step.

She had been struggling against the coming of this change, struggling to ignore its very imminence, for weeks. There was a place in her heart from which she had resolutely kept her consciousness. But it was growing greater all the time, encroaching upon, engulfing all the rest of her being. And it had been on this very day that the last remaining neutral territory had been absorbed.

She had mimicked him to her glass, and ridiculed him to her mirror. She had compared him mercilessly to other men of her set, laughing at his impossible hair, and caricaturing his hesitant speech. She had told herself that very morning that he was the most tiresome blunderer, the most absurdly clumsy creature, the very laughing-stock of Fortune. She had even, sitting before her mirror, done in monologue the tale of his passion for some imagined lady fair, spluttered through a declaration, and then heroically attacked the beginning of the marriage service. And suddenly in the midst of her laughter, she had slipped to her knees, burying her face in her arms, and cried for very shame of her own incomprehensible heart.

All day—now that she stood self-confessed in her own eyes—she had had a hunted feeling. She would have been glad to escape from that most vigilant

of all accusers. But at last, though worn to a dullness in the struggle of it, she had succeeded in accepting and facing the truth, and preparing herself to conceal it at all costs from a world more merciless even than herself.

When she had seen him afar on the Avenue she had tried to rehearse his absurdities, but she could only see that he was tall and spare, as a man should be, that his eyes were clear and gray and kindly, as she best loved eyes to be, and that his heart leaped toward her when he saw her, as her own had wished it should.

And even now, in the midst of surroundings calculated to show him at his worst, she was waiting for him to come, she was weary of the way to which she had set her face, she was impatient of herself and of his absence.

Then he came, and saw the tired pressure in her smile; that even when she greeted him her lids seemed unable, or unwilling, to lift their barriers from her eyes. She almost brusquely engineered his introduction to a woman nearby, and almost rudely left them. She was amazed at herself, angry and chagrined. She was fretful, changeable, and as weary as old age.

A little while later he dared to seek her out again, and she took him away languidly to see, as a familiar friend might care to, the new decorations in the breakfast-room. He noticed that she never raised her eyes to the fresco in which she professed such interest, once they were there, and in looking down at her it seemed to him suddenly that she was giving all her attention to keeping her frounces at a safe distance from his feet. He stepped instinctively from her when he perceived it, and his eyes filled with the hurt look of a sensitive boy. She gave a little tender cry, and put her hand upon his arm. "I didn't mean to!" she said.

And then, for no weightier reason than the light, pretty touch, he forgot all his resolutions and decisions and determinations, and he took the hand in his own and kissed it heavily, and—mark you, Demosthenes!—without the



halting of a single syllable, told her how dearly beloved she was, how immeasurably adored, how humbly worshiped.

She left her hand in his, and listened, it seemed to her afterward, for a long space. In reality it was only a moment. As her hand withdrew from his she partially turned from him. His eager voice ceased, and there was a silence. She stood biting her lips and trying to keep the tears she dreaded from showing in her eyes. When he spoke again his voice was quite changed. It was no longer pleading and ardent. It was colder, but stronger, more imperious.

"Nora!"

She turned to him, instinctively obedient to the masterful tone. Then angry with herself, she averted her eyes.

"You listened—you heard—you have some answer——"

As the overwhelming impulse of the truth surged within her, she was silent a moment, fearing her voice might betray her. In the momentary hesitation he went to her side, and taking her hand again, forced her sternly to face him. "You will do me the honor——"

She lifted her eyes to his as if compelled to it against her will. As he looked into them, his hands with a sudden violence closed upon hers harshly.

"Nora—you care—?" he gasped.

Under the demand of his searching eyes she could not lie to him. "You care?" he insisted.

She whispered the word involuntarily, "Yes."

He drew a deep breath, his lips quivering. He made an instinctive, masculine, hungry gesture to draw her nearer. At the instant a burst of music from the adjoining room startled her, and brought the sea of her world flooding back to separate them. She gathered herself with a swift revulsion and drew her hands away sharply. "I don't know what is the matter with me—I have lost my mind—I ask your pardon—it is quite impossible——" Her words tumbled over one another in her

eagerness to blot out the fatal admission, to cover it up beneath a torrent of contradiction. "I've got a bad headache—you frightened me—I didn't know what I was saying——"

"One moment!" His voice broke in upon hers incisively. She was silent, helpless. "I have t-taken you unaw-ware. You are un-prepared. But whatever you wish to ac-c-omplish, don't lie to me."

He looked down at her as she stood, trembling, before him.

"Since you c-cannot face the truth, and conf-ess your weakness, al-l-low me to interpret your meaning. I should be an ab-burd *parti* for a g-girl with your 'chances,' shouldn't I? You n-n-know your world would laugh at you. People would be drawing pictures of the R-ridiculous Match. People would be p-prophe-sying a tumble on the ch-chancel steps, betting on the l-l-length of time it w-w-would take me to say 'I, R-r-richard, take thee, N-n-nora.' It would be the best j-joke of many seasons, wouldn't it? People would l-laugh at you, ind-deed they would. And then there's T-terran-nora, and n-nobody would laugh at you for m-m-marrying him, though some of us might w-want to cry! I n-never meant to tell you, Nora, that I cared for y-you. I w-wish to God I never had! I w-wish to God you had b-been able to lie to me from the beg-g-inning instead of showing me y-your heart, and then belying that!" He turned a little from her, and his hands clenched, then relaxed as he laughed. "But what would you do with a ridiculous c-clumsy f-fool of a man around, who would s-step on your dresses, and sp-spill things when your grand people came to tea, a red-head-ed f-fool who couldn't d-dance when your balls were in p-progress. W-w-wouldn't it be f-funny?"

She shrank a little at the hurt of his laughter.

"And so the c-clumsy f-fool will take himself off, and the woman of his heart and soul will g-g-give herself——"

"You are unkind!" she cried sharply.

He laughed again. "I? I—un-



kind? B-b-bless you, I'm not the author of this m-miserable tale! It is your own c-creation. And I am only a sup-perfluous character in the p-plot, an awkward, inconv-venient duffer, whom you m-must g-g-get rid of. Why not s-send him off to India or somewhere where you couldn't be expected to attend his funeral, and l-let him g-get himself killed? D-d-death is a d-deucedly necessary end for s-someone in y-your story, N-nora. I am sure your conscience w-would feel easier if you were sure he w-was out of his m-misery and——"

"Don't! Please, please don't!" The tears suddenly flooded up into her eyes. She looked up at him with the desperate look of a woman who hears and cannot obey her heart's voice. It seemed for a moment as if she would speak, then that her mouth was smitten with an eternal dumbness. Her throat grew great with her sobs. She turned and fled from his unwavering and accusing gaze.

Richard found his way silently and blindly to the cloak-room, gathered his belongings, and made his way to the door. Young Carton St. John tried to detain him with a friendly remonstrance, but Richard merely shook his head, without so much as seeming to recognize the boy. As the door closed on him, Carton St. John brought his boyish fist down upon the card-stand with a bang. "It's Nora, damnation!" he said. "And the best fellow in the world!" For Carton shared the world's fondness for "R-r-richard K-k-quaintance."

In the study at the Quaintance house, the trio were still communicating with one another through the dense fog of tobacco smoke that filled the room when Richard came in almost noiselessly. Reeve Raymond jumped up as he entered. "You, back again? It must be shockingly late!" he exclaimed penitently.

Liddon rose too. "We should have gone long ago—there is our early start tomorrow to consider as well as our host." He turned to Quaintance with a gesture and look and tone that were

his father's come back to earth. "You've been most indelibly kind to us."

Quaintance, protesting, got to his feet with a host's reluctance very considerably reinforced by an unfeigned unwillingness to let them go.

"What time do you sail?" said Richard, to Liddon, as they came together.

"The ungodly hour of seven marks our departure! I suppose you don't care to come down and see us off."

Richard glanced past him at his uncle's face, and though he spoke to the Raymonds he looked at Quaintance. "If you were s-s-serious and sinc-ere in your invitation," he said slowly, "and I shall n-n-not in any way interfere in y-your plans and w-welfare, I will sail with you tomorrow."

Another April sun and yet another had done its best to bring the old sense of cheer to the house of Quaintance. But not even its young, sweet warmth could dispel the mist of loneliness that hung about the place. No, not about the place, but about the man himself, for wherever he went the same gray emptiness surrounded him. It was more than loneliness, it was anxiety and fear. He had let Richard go because Richard went. But his heart had grown chill with the memory of the stories Liddon and Reeve had told, and he dreaded the news of each succeeding day. For a time all had gone well. He had had letters at intervals, by every steamer, to be sure, but very far apart. Then, as the actual entrance into the wilderness was effected, the letters were separated by long months of waiting, and when they came were but disturbing repetitions of the same theme—trouble with the blacks, sickness among themselves, lack of the necessities of life, privations of the most abhorrent kind, made bearable only by the glow of excitement and suspense.

Then came the long silence.

The whirling moil of Manhattan activity went on in full swing. The blare

and crash and deafening racket of the city continued and increased. But to Heber Quaintance it had been blotted out as if the Angel of Death had sealed his ears. He could hear nothing but the noiseless perpetuation of that thin, knife-like stream of silence that steered its way through storm and sea to him.

Like the slow, crazing drip of the torturing water upon the forehead of the subtle Inquisition's victim, the weeks counted themselves away in sickening monotony upon his heart. The only son he ever had—the dear, great-hearted boy he loved—where? What? Night ceased to bring its deep, lethargic quiet to this thought. Sleep came in slow, reluctant spaces, responding to the imperious call of Nature, but evermore came laden with distracting dreams and vivid visions of diabolic horror.

Quaintance grew old. His hair, once white, grew whiter. All his slender frame wore out its tissues to infirmity. His weakness crept upon him like a death. And still forever the long silence lengthened, strengthened, gathered volume and became a voice, a message of despair.

Once when he had dared to follow the old, familiar way from the white arch, he met her walking there. He saw it all upon her face—the consciousness of her wretched accountability. In the instant he had hated, pitied and been drawn to her. She had questioned him; he never knew in just what way she voiced the unappeased anxiety that gnawed her heart, but he should never forget how he had answered her, "May God forgive you, Nora St. John!"

It was unpardonable, it was unlike him. But the whole even tenor of his ways had been dislodged by the eruption of this volcanic change. He had gone on brusquely, saying to himself, "Yes, I am here. Here is the crossing of the great arteries of New York. Here are police, doctors, soldiers: protection, attendance and order. And where is Dick—living, suffering, dying, dead? Who knows? And who can help him?"

It had gone on so long, this fearing of the worst, that when the news came, when the few short words flung themselves along the dreadful thread that had been spun by the long, awful silence, they seemed to bring almost good news instead of bad. Then followed days that taught him that there were yet degrees of torture that he had not suffered. There seemed a tension in his brain that, had it snapped the cords it leaned on, would have brought him into the shadowed valley. Yet it was something that he might bestir himself to prepare his house for this beloved and exigent guest. It was something that he might plan and order and supervise the thorough remodeling of the necessary rooms. It was something that, with doctors and nurses at his side, he could anticipate the needs and wants of this laniated body.

The day itself, the day of days, the dreaded day of dreaded days, dawned at last with that inevitable, grim precision of eternity. Quaintance, down on the pier, looked at the water with a wonder that it should be so jubilantly blue, looked at the sun and marveled at its smile, and watched the dim horizon with a fear of its disclosures. Behind him, though he had not turned his head to look, stood those two men with their narrow shutter; among the many equipages of delight stood that long, hearsing wagon of distress.

The great ship in its majesty was brought to dock and lay panting in its large fatigue, recovering its heavy breath. Girls, men, boys, women, children streamed to and fro, joyous, light-hearted, laughing! Then something like a presence passed among those near the plank. They fell back silent, hushed, abashed. He saw the two men with the narrow stretcher come his way. Beside it walked two men whose faces he should have known. He fought for his breath, clinging to a near support. Dick—his boy! Dick—his boy! As they neared him he fell in with them. It seemed a kind of dream. The merry bustle of the dock, of reunited friends, of luggage laden

with delights, boiled around him in unreality.

He walked beside the shutter silently. When it was glided to its easy place in that strange wagon that observes the wounds of men, he swung himself into a seat beside it. Without even the alarm of the bell they slowly made their way through the grime-powdered thicket of the wide commercial water-front. They slipped silently, slowly into the current of the upward trend.

Then one of the attendants lifted the barrier from his face. The sufferer turned his head and sighed, without opening his eyes. Quaintance drew breath and looked; and all the length of that long drive looked, and yet looked and looked.

Richard? Dick? With deep, grave lines of man's distress across his cheeks? Gray hair? Closed eyes? A mouth drawn grimly into lines of iron? Dick? Richard? He sat transfixed, staring down at the recumbent body. Something about the way the light blanket fell in folds held his eye with a sinister insistence. The mold of it seemed incomplete, unnatural.

Quaintance glanced up to find the eyes of the doctor, Hemingway, upon him. "How he sleeps!" he said softly, yet in a kind of relief at having the silence broken.

The doctor nodded. "Morphia. The excitement of the landing and all that would have killed him."

Quaintance shuddered and his eyes went back to the still, strange figure.

It was a long ride, for the ambulance merely crept along, but in the course of human events it came to its predestined end before the Quaintance house. The doors opened at the instant of their coming to a stand before them, and stood wide, giving quiet, noiseless welcome to the darkened, peaceful house.

The men mounted the steps slowly, carefully, giving the whole of their strength and control and gentleness to the carrying of the motionless figure on its narrow tray. Quaintance followed the doctors. Then the doors closed

silently, and Quaintance breathed a deep sigh, in sad exultance that at least they had brought him back where he might be served and loved and tended.

Without arousing him from that sheltering sleep, they laid him into bed in a room above, a white, bare room, which the lack of sunlight tempered to a dull, soft gray. And here it was that Quaintance stood, still looking down at the face aged by such sudden, dreadful magic, lying motionless, sightless, upon the cool pillows, and at the strange, incomplete, unnatural mold of the covering drawn to his very chin.

Here he stood, almost as motionless himself, until someone touched him and spoke to him, and then, seeing that he did not comprehend, led him away. He passed three men upon the stairs, who nodded and spoke cheerfully, and understood that he was unconscious of not having answered. He went down into the study. He had been told to wait, that they would send. He was obeying with the unquestioning stupidity of a soldier.

Someone else was in the study, flung into a deep chair, relaxed, wearied, almost, it appeared, at the point of collapse. Quaintance looked at the face until vague memories began to stir in his dulled wits—a brown face, pale, dried-looking hair, a scar across the eyebrow—Reeve Raymond's boy! He went to him and touched him on the shoulder. With a sudden, guttural scream, Liddon sprang to his feet.

"Hush, hush!" said Quaintance, becoming wholly aroused in an instant as the sharp cry broke through the hypnotic quiet of the house. "I'm sorry I startled you."

Liddon stood gathering himself with an effort. His eyes were bright and restless. "Stupid of me," he managed to say at last, sinking back into the chair. "No nerves left, sir; crazy old woman!"

"I'll get you some whisky," said Quaintance, thoroughly alert in the relief of personally serving someone. He opened a cabinet near at hand and

poured a good glassful for the man. Liddon drank it slowly, gratefully.

Although so deeply concerned in the story of what had brought them all to such a pass, Quaintance knew nothing. There had been nobody to tell him. It was because of this that he blundered upon the tragedy with such an unthinking brutality.

"Where is Reeve?" he asked gently.

Liddon turned to look at him, and Quaintance instinctively flung out a hand as if to silence an audible voice. In the agony, however, and speechlessness of Liddon's face, he was answered.

"My God!" he whispered, and his legs shook as if with a mortal terror.

"You?" he ventured, after a sickened silence.

"I!" The man spoke almost fiercely. "Look at me—alive, unhurt, untouched, unchanged!" The dry glitter of his eyes belied the statement. "I had gone on—the devils missed my trail." He flung himself back in the chair. "Don't look at me as if you thought me insane. I'm not that, yet! But it does drive me to the verge of madness—how can I? How can I?" He beat his hands on the leathern arms of the chair. "I found them—it was all over then—I got to them—found them—stumbled on them—oh, to forget, forget, my God, to forget!"

Quaintance stood before him helpless. Just to distract his thoughts he said, "You came with Dick?"

Liddon looked up, crushing his hands together. "Yes, yes, I came. They said—the doctor from Embomma and the ship's surgeon—that he could not possibly be put aboard the steamer. But he would have it so. He said he would keep himself alive long enough to get back here. Well, he's done it, too. He said there was someone—a girl, of course?"

Quaintance nodded slowly.

"I suppose we ought to send for her," suggested Liddon, who seemed soothed by having something to plan and think about. "He will want to see her—that's what he came home for—that and you."

Quaintance tried to moisten his lips with his dry tongue. The words almost refused to come. "He has got to die?"

Liddon, forgetting his own terrible sorrow, rose, laying a hand on the other's arm. "Haven't they told you?" he said gently. "Yes, he's got to die. How can he live—*like that?*"

Quaintance felt the tears rise in his eyes and roll over his cheeks and was unashamed. "He has come so far!" he said. "Isn't that something? He has lived so many days—isn't there a chance?"

As if to answer his pleading question, Hemingway came to the door. He came in somewhat slowly, and there hung about him the bitter smell of the surgeon's precautionary chlorides. Quaintance turned to him at Liddon's indication, still with the tears upon his face.

"Come, Mr. Quaintance," said Hemingway, "we must not give up our courage while he remains so brave."

Quaintance searched his face for the light of hopeful news.

"Tell him," said Liddon Raymond. "It's better than uncertainty."

Dr. Hemingway came nearer. "We have done all we can, all that human skill can do. The only marvel is that he has lived so long. He has kept himself alive by sheer force of will."

"How long, then?" said Quaintance, in a dull, heavy voice.

"He may live until tomorrow," said Hemingway.

"Until tomorrow!" echoed Quaintance stupidly.

"I have telegraphed for Dr. Desfèbres. You've heard of him? I took the liberty, knowing you cared nothing about the cost. He cannot get here until nightfall, but he may be able to give us a little more time, to make the end a little more kind." He was silent a moment, looking pityingly at the twitching face. "Your nephew will be conscious by-and-bye—is there anyone he wants to see? You might as well grant him the wish. The excitement of denial would be worse than that of seeing someone. And, after



all, he might as well have what he wants."

Liddon put his arm through Quaintance's, and drew him toward the table. "Come, write her a line," he said softly, motioning the doctor to go out. "I'll take it to her myself."

But Hemingway did not go out. As Quaintance began half-heartedly to write, the doctor drew Liddon aside. "There isn't a ghost of a chance, not one," he said softly. "I sent for Desfèbres just that he"—with a nod at the desk—"might see we had done everything. But as for you, you're in pretty bad shape! You need care. Do betake yourself to your physician, or if you haven't one, let me straighten you out."

"You think I am going crazy, too?" said Liddon. The natural look departed from his face as the interest in other matters disappeared, swinging his mind again to its unwholesome recollections. "I know I am. But nobody shall ever shut me up, by God! It's easier to die once, than fifty thousand times."

Hemingway laughed. "Nobody thinks you are crazy," he replied good-humoredly. "But you have had a hard time, and my prescription would be rest and good port wine and shredded raw meat——"

Liddon tore his arm away and his face became convulsed with horror. With an inarticulate cry of loathing, he pushed the doctor aside and rushed away.

Quaintance looked up at the sound. "What is it?"

"Mr. Raymond has gone," said Hemingway. "I must have said something to offend him. He will come back."

But he did not. Neither Quaintance nor Hemingway ever saw the poor haunted soul again.

The letter despatched to Nora, Quaintance went above stairs to wait for that moment of Richard's returning consciousness which would begin the first of those precious hours of life. The supreme quietude of the sick-room, the calm poise of the nurse mov-

ing about noiselessly, helped him to regain his own accustomed control. He began to realize that courage was the better part of affliction. He sat near the bed, watching, waiting.

Then at last the spell of coma was lifted from the sufferer, and his eyes opened. The nurse was at his side at the first flicker of the eyelids.

"It's all right—you are right here—you mustn't worry," she said soothingly. She laid her cool fingers on his pulse while he lay looking up into her face with the wide stare of a newly awakened child. Presently she said, "Would you like to see your uncle, now?" She made a faint sign to Quaintance as she spoke. He came toward her, amazed at his own calm, and she made way for him.

"Well, Dick!" said he quietly.

Richard's eyes looked at him hungrily. "I d-did get back," he whispered with difficulty.

Something caught Quaintance by the throat, but he managed to smile and speak steadily. "To be sure you did," he answered gently. "It is good to get you back. We are all very, very glad."

Richard was silent and then a little change in his face showed as the ghost of a smile. "I b-brought you the g-ghoorki," he whispered. "I think I f-f-fought with it. I don't remember."

"You mustn't talk now," said the nurse, coming to his side with a tiny glassful of nourishment. "You must try to be quiet."

Richard, when he had swallowed the stuff, turned his eyes impatiently upon his uncle as his nurse moved away. Quaintance, without a pang of jealousy, nodded and smiled. "I've sent for her," he said softly. "Now, rest and save yourself for her. She will be here by and bye."

Richard smiled once, and sighed and closed his eyes.

Quaintance stole from the room, at the nurse's suggestive nod, and went back to the library. Even to him who was waiting the time seemed impossibly short before the man ushered



Nora and Carton into the room. Even if Quaintance had not lost all lingering feeling of his resentment toward her, her white, sweet face with its look of frightened tenderness would have made her dear to him. She put her hand in his and lifted her face. He leaned toward her, drawing her nearer, and kissed her gently. It seemed a very natural thing to do.

Carton, straight, strong, young, seemed as he greeted Quaintance nervously, almost to deprecate the healthfulness of his being. He felt himself too sharp a contrast in the house of pain.

The older man pressed his hand warmly. "Suppose you go up," he said, "and see him, and let him get used to the idea that she is here? I want to have her to myself, too, a moment, just to explain to her, to prepare her. Don't let him talk very much, you know; try to guess what he wants to say and help him out."

Carton nodded, laying down his hat. "It's the room just over this," said Quaintance, and the boy went out.

Quaintance made her sit down on the couch and gave her a little glass of sherry. He sat beside her and took her hand. "I want to tell you as much as I can, to spare him and you. He is very much changed—you must prepare yourself for that. He looks older, I think, than I do. His hair is very gray—yes, very gray, and his face is deeply lined. His eyes are unchanged, except that they have a new look of suffering in them. He is in very bad shape, you know." He patted her hand tenderly. "You must be a brave little woman, won't you? For his sake? It's hard I know, it is hard even for me to keep the tears out of my eyes when I look at him. We—we are going to lose him, my dear. I must tell you even the worst, Nora. We are going to lose him very soon—perhaps tonight. He has kept himself alive, the doctor says, by sheer force of will power. He wanted to get back here before he died. Do you know why, Nora? To see you, my dear, to see you. And thank God

he is to have his wish. You mustn't be frightened and cry, will you? It would distress him so, wound him so. He has no power to move anything but his right hand, and that only a very little. And I know he will want to touch your hand; so if you would just put yours into his I am sure it would make him very happy. You will do that, won't you?"

"I will do everything and anything," she answered, struggling to overcome the pain in her throat that sought relief in tears. "He is dearer to me than all the earth and heaven."

They sat silently then, hand in hand, waiting for Carton. He came in slowly, keeping his eyes away from them. Nora jumped up and went to him.

"Carton?"

"He wants you, Nonnie," said the boy, in a queer, restricted voice. "He said—he said—" He turned from her and dropped into a chair, burying his face in his hands.

She knelt beside him. "Tell me, dear, tell me."

"His face—his eyes!" sobbed Carton.

She put her arm over his shoulder. "Yes, dear, yes. But we must think of him now—he will be getting impatient, and that is bad for him. He wants me—now?"

"He wants you to marry him," said the boy, lifting his face. "And you will, Nonnie, won't you? He wants to call you his wife, he said. He said he heard the doctors say he would die before tomorrow, and he said perhaps you wouldn't mind, just for those short hours, belonging to him. He smiled just the way he used to and asked me for your hand, and tried to tell me about his income, and that kind of thing. You will be good to him, won't you, Nonnie? I know you care for him!"

Nora rose slowly; her eyes looked dazed.

"Yes, I will do it," she said, and her voice trembled.

Carton got up and found his hat. "I'm going to get Dr. Marsh to come around at once, and I'll get some

flowers." He turned to Quaintance. "Father and mother are both away, but you will understand, of course. And I'll be here, at any rate."

Quaintance nodded and smiled, and the young fellow hurried away. Then silently, Quaintance took her hand, and led her to the stair and stood watching her as she went upward slowly, leaning heavily upon the baluster at every step.

She found herself at the door, and stopped, her heart beating wildly. Then, without a sound, she pushed the door open and went in, and scarcely daring to lift her eyes to his face, sank on her knees beside the bed and laid her lips to the still, right hand that lay upon the coverlet.

She heard him draw almost sobbingly a long, broken, rapturous sigh, and she heard him whisper her name. Then she lifted her head and met his eyes, feeling a sharp constriction in her heart at the sight of his ravaged face. And obeying his look, she leaned until her lips touched his.

"Dear, dear heart!" he whispered happily, and again, "Dear," and again, "Dear heart!"

So they remained inarticulately communing with their love, until Quaintance and Carton came in with their arms full of roses. The bare room was transformed into a hymeneal bower. Carton put a wreath of orange-blossoms upon Nora's pretty hair, and decorated Quaintance and himself with huge gardenias. The flimsy barrier of bridal veils shut the dark presence of the dark tomorrow from the room. Nora's laugh rang almost real, Quaintance spoke cheerily, Carton was gay.

And then came Dr. Marsh in his surplice, with as much dignity as if following a whole choir, bringing the sense of churchly benignance with him. Quaintance took his own ring, carved with the crest of the family, and gave it into Richard's hand for Nora.

But untroubled and smiling as they all seemed, the solemn service with its frequent reference to death was a sad strain upon them, and they were glad

when it was over. Then, after a little, they all went out, leaving the two together, and bearing away the over-sweet roses. The room resumed its bare appearance, but it was full of a new glory, and though Richard's orders were to rest, perhaps to sleep, there was a new and peaceful glorification of even so usual a phenomenon.

Nora, decrowned, darkened the dim room, and with a shy reluctance laid her sweet head beside his own, her fingers lightly wound in his, her own eyes closed as if to assist him in winning sleep. But whimsical the poppy-wreathed goddess proved herself to be, for she came to Nora, and denied herself to Dick.

It seemed to Richard, as he lay in his eternal immobility, that he had never heard sung so sweet a joy as this, her gentle, dainty breath—now felt, now lacking—on his cheek, the delicate touch of her soft hair upon his temple, and the clinging of her little dreaming hand.

What if it was his own but for a few dear hours? Could he have won it in any other way than by this grim sacrifice of limb and life? Had he returned even as he went away, would it have been any more possible for her to link her life to his own clumsy, inferior existence than it had been before? And was he afraid or even sorry to pay his price for this delicious prize? How long ago he had said it, how true it yet remained—he was a superfluous character in the story, and must be removed, a very necessary end was his. He had been blindly, selfishly cruel with her that night, and she had forgiven him!

He turned his head a little to look at her, and moved the hand that he could move just to feel that it lay in hers. How beautiful she was, how childish her dear face looked in its unconsciousness! How good she had been to grant him his wish. She had not scorned it as a sick man's absurdity. She should never regret it, never. He was glad, as he thought of it now, glad he had so much of this world's goods that she might have the more. By

the same hour tomorrow, it would all be hers, that and her old freedom. She was fitted to be the mate of a grander, greater man than he had ever seen—pray God that he who won her would be worthy of her beauty and her kindness.

The warm blood in her fingers beat steadily against his own, thrilling him with new powers, new life, new capabilities. Her breath upon his face was as the breath of life. Afraid to die? Not he! Even the whole horrible tragedy was not enough to pay for this. He whispered to himself softly, "My heaven comes before my death."

Night gradually fell in soft twilights out of doors, and still she slept. Indeed, until the entrance of the nurse aroused her, she never moved.

Richard watched her with an exquisite delight in the intimacy as she stood before the mirror, patting her hair, and twitching her gown into place. The nurse stood by his bed waiting for her to go, but turned away and busied herself at the little medicine table near him, as Nora bent over him for their first parting since his ring had linked her hand to his.

"It is the doctor," she said softly. "When he has gone I will come back, and we will have our dinner here perhaps."

He smiled into her eyes. "Soon!" he whispered. She nodded, smiled, and kissed him. And then with many lingering looks she went away and down the stairs.

At the door of the study Quaintance met her, and led her in. Dr. Desfèbres was standing near the window. Hemingway and another man stepped softly out as she came in.

"This is my nephew's wife, Dr. Desfèbres," said Quaintance.

Nora went to him slowly and put out her hand. He took it with a sympathetic murmur. Something of his great compassion, nurtured and sensitized by his long contact with the sufferings of his human kind, shone down from his eyes upon her face. Her long straining at composure was evidenced in the suddenness of her collapse. She lifted

the famous hand to her lips, tears as uncounted as the Magdalene's pouring from her heart. "You will do all you can," she implored him, "for God's sake, all you can! I love him so, and he must live—he must!"

Desfèbres took her easily in his iron strength and carried her to the couch. She buried her face in its pillows, weeping unrestrainedly. He patted her head with the hand that had performed so many miracles. "Courage, courage," he said, in his deep, fatherly voice. "We shall see, we shall see." Then with a nod to Quaintance he was gone.

An hour later Richard lay watching the doctors, in the embrasure of the window talking inaudibly and with great earnestness. He smiled as he thought how futile was their labor. Was there no discouragement for men of their craft save actual death?

The little group broke up and came toward him.

"I shall be back again soon," said Desfèbres, whose voice itself gave strength to those he served. He shook Richard's hand with more pressure than movement. "Dr. Hemingway wants to speak to you a moment, I think. Harkness and I will go."

Hemingway did want to say something, but apparently found the greatest difficulty in approaching it. "We have had quite a long séance, have we not?" he uneasily began.

Richard smiled. "Don't b-b-beat about the b-bush," he said in his hoarse whisper. "You want to tell me that I am g-going to die. Don't you suppose I n-n-know that?"

Dr. Hemingway looked with great interest at the pattern of the coverlet. "Desfèbres is a great man," he remarked with apparent irrelevance. "He has done marvelous things, unbelievable things." He glanced briefly at Dick's face. "He has thrown considerable light upon your case. I am free to say there is a phase of it that had escaped me—a most favorable phase! Indeed, with an operation, in which he has met the greatest success before, he thinks——"

Richard's face went suddenly more gray. "Do you m-mean," he said almost aloud, "that there is a ch-chance I may l-live?"

Dr. Hemingway nodded slightly. "There is a chance, a most undoubted chance. In fact, we hope everything!" The good friend was almost overcome himself. "Desfèbres will be back presently—" he went to the door with an awkward smile. "You would like to be alone a few moments, I know."

The door closed.

Live? Live? Richard lay staring wide-eyed into the dusk of the room. Live? And Nora, tied to a motionless, worthless, lifeless, revolting cripple? Why, he had tricked her, entrapped her, deceived her! It was impossible. He was in honor bound to die.

In a few minutes they would come back, with their damned ingenious skill. And he would never be alone again perhaps. If he was to decide, to plan, to act, it must be now, now, while he was here alone. Ah, what it was to be a helpless log! He looked about the room. Was Nora to spend her blithe, fresh youth in such a room, with such a destiny, with her own heart growing heavier, colder, quieter, sadder, every day she lived? Not while he could move a single finger!

He turned his head, slowly, deliberately, painfully. The little table with its load of bottles and paraphernalia stood at the head of the bed, almost out of reach. In the dim light he could make out that one of the bottles was of a warning blue, made in a curious shape so that one might not mistake it even in the dark. He almost laughed aloud when he saw it, and slowly and painfully he dragged his arm toward his pillow. His fingers clutched the linen of the bed, and drew themselves along. It was a slow progress—his heart beat impa-

tiently. At any moment someone might come in. At any moment they might all come back, and put their heavy seals upon poor Nora's fate.

He was in honor bound to die. No one could look upon the face of Dian, and survive the glory. Gladly, gladly, was he to pay the price that he had promised should be paid.

At last the creeping fingers touched the table, the glass, the spoon, a bottle, then another, then the little bottle of a warning blue made in a curious shape so that one might not mistake it even in the dark. His fingers closed upon it as a miser's upon a golden rouleau. He drew it triumphantly toward him. It brought a curious sweet and acrid smell to his nostrils as he drew the cork with his teeth.

After all, what was this thing called death that man could prison it in a bottle as if it were a genie? What was this thing called death that it could hide away in this small vial of brownish wine? What was this thing called death that a man but touched his mouth to it and lost his soul?

There came to his mind the Persian song of life and love, and he repeated softly to himself:

So when that Angel of the darker Drink  
At last shall find you by the river-brink,  
And, offering his Cup, invite your Soul  
Forth to your lips to quaff—you shall not shrink.

The sound of something like a step outside startled him. He lifted the little bottle as high as his enfeebled arm in its last urge of strength could raise it. "To Nora," said he, with an exultant surge of transport. "May her life be as sweet to her as my death to me!"

The nurse came in after a little. And by the dim light near her desk made her last entry on the doctor's chart—Eight-thirty, sleeping quietly.



## WHAT FOR

"WHEN he kissed you did you scream for your mother?"  
"No, for joy!"

## AT THE WHARF END

YE'LL weep it out, and sleep it out,  
 Faith, forget me in a day!  
 Ye'll talk it out, and walk it out—  
 Yis, I'll be long away!

But what a heavin' shoulder this  
 To rock a lad to sleep!  
 Ach, me gurl, that one kiss,  
 Ye *knew* it couldn't keep!

Some cry it out, and sigh it out,  
 But *we'll* forgit the ache!  
 Ye'll laugh it off, and chaff it off,  
 And learn to give and take!

And that's the gray ship waitin' me—  
 Sure, what's the good o' tears!  
 It's got to be, and ought to be—  
 One kiss—for twinty years!

ARTHUR STRINGER.



## THE WOMAN OF IT

G LADYS—You seem to get as much pleasure out of this bit of scandal as all the rest of us put together.

MYRTLE—Why shouldn't I? She was my dearest friend.



## PROBABLY

T HE GOVERNOR—My boy, I hear you have been seen with some chorus-girls.

THE BOY—Who told you—the chorus-girls?



# BUT ONCE A YEAR

By Ellis Parker Butler

MR. AND MRS. GREGORY believed in Christmas, and they believed in letting their two children believe in Santa Claus. They had believed in Santa Claus when they were young, and they could not see that the fiction had in any way ruined their ultimate love of truth. They had no hard feelings toward the mythic William Tell nor objections to an impossible Jack-the-Giant-Killer. In fact, they rather urged the fabulous beings of one sort and another upon the young Gregorys, for they detected a vein of truthfulness in their offspring that was alarming in its consistency. There is danger that the child of tomorrow may become too skeptical for comfort.

Really, the Santa Claus myth did the young Gregorys no harm. They accepted it solemnly and gratefully; considered it from all points of view and put it aside as futile and childish.

"Now," said Mrs. Gregory, as Christmas approached, "Santa Claus will be here in only two more weeks! Just think, dears, only fourteen days! Aren't you glad?"

Bob and Bet stood obediently at her knee and listened, as was their duty. They tried to look joyous.

"Yes'm," they said solemnly.

"Don't say 'yes'm,'" said Mrs. Gregory. "Say plain 'yes' or 'no.' I detest such meekness. Now; are you glad that Christmas will be here so soon?"

"Yes, I detest such meekness," echoed Bob promptly. Bet saw the look of surprise on her mother's face and cast a glance of contempt at Bob.

"No," she announced, "I detest such meekness."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Greg-

ory. "Do you know what you are talking about?"

"No'm," they replied in chorus.

"Then what makes you answer?" demanded Mrs. Gregory.

Bet, from her two years' advantage in age, felt herself of necessity a leader. She rolled her eyes toward the ceiling, seeking inspiration. Looking heavenward suggested an answer.

"Our sponsors in baptism," she quoted glibly.

"That has nothing whatever to do with it; nothing whatever!" said Mrs. Gregory. "We will leave the catechism entirely alone. We will have a nice, cozy little talk about Christmas and Santa Claus."

"Yes'm," said Bob and Bet.

"We are so glad Christmas is coming," Mrs. Gregory continued in her most joyful voice. "It makes us happy. Because," she added, "we can give to others and thus make them happy."

"And others can give to us," said Bet, "and be happy. Things we don't want—things we hate. They ought to be happy. They get rid of them. I hope nobody gives me leggin's."

Mrs. Gregory, having already purchased the leggings, felt some embarrassment, but she smiled cheerfully and continued her lesson.

"And we must remember," she said, "that it is always more blessed to give than to receive."

"Leggin's," murmured Bet.

Bob stared at his mother with serious eyes.

"What's blessed?" he asked. The word pleased him. It sounded quite like a swear word.

"Blessed," explained Mrs. Gregory,

"is—it means to have a blessing. Everything good is a blessing. Let me see, how *can* I explain it to you? Bet, bring me the dictionary, will you, dear?"

Bet brought it.

"H'm!" mused Mrs. Gregory. "'Consecrated, holy, worthy of adoration, enjoying supreme happiness or felicity.' That's it. A person who is blessed is as happy as happy can be. So when you give things to others it makes you happy. And do you know why we ought to be happier at Christmas-time than at any other time of the year?"

Bob, searching his memory, recalled a cause of bliss from the relics of last Christmas.

"Because," he announced, "Santy Claus gets his whiskers caught afire."

"No!" Bet chided him. "That shows how ignorant you are, Bob. We ought to weep for that—not be happy. Let's weep."

Mrs. Gregory forestalled the weep.

"Not now," she cried. "You tell us why we should be happy at Christmas, Bet."

Bet clasped her hands in the region of her sashbow at the back and recited glibly:

"Because it is more blessed to give than to receive. Blessed, holy, consecrated, enjoying supreme happiness or fertility."

"What's fertility?" asked Bob.

"It's a bless," said Bet. "You get it when you give folks things at Christmas."

Bob looked at his mother wistfully.

"I want to get a bless," he declared.

"Why don't you keep still when mama's talking?" asked Bet. "It's rude to interrupt. Don't do it. Anyway, you don't know what you're talking about. I guess we'll get a few blesses ourselves."

"A great many, dears," said Mrs. Gregory. "But I think it is also blessed to receive. Sometimes it is more blessed to receive than give. You can't understand that now. Some time you will."

"I understand now," said Bet.

"So do I," said Bob.

Mrs. Gregory smiled.

"Perhaps you do," she said; "I am not quite sure that I understand it myself. But we won't argue that now."

"Oh, yes!" pleaded Bet, "let's argue it."

"No," said her mother firmly, "we will not. When persons don't understand a thing they should never argue about it."

"Me and Bob does," said Bet, as if that were sufficient reason.

"Yes, we does," said Bob sagely.

"Always," added Bet. "Whenever we don't know anything about anything we argue it. That's how we find out which is wrong."

"Yes'm," said Bob, swelling with the noble thought. "And—and whoever says 'quit' first, he's wrong. And if he don't holler even if his hair's pulled right out, he's right. And Bet's right. And we're both right."

"But you generally holler," Bet reminded him.

"Yes," said Bob placidly. "I *always* holler."

"Come on," urged Bet, "let's argue."

"Oh, no," begged Bob, "I want to hear about Christmas. Besides, my nose is sore from the last time. Let's listen. Maybe she'll tell us something real good to argue."

Mrs. Gregory was used to the idiosyncrasies of her offspring. She had learned to let them have their own way. They had been her teachers. As one makes a virtue of a necessity, she had come to see in the vagaries of Bob and Bet the healthy exuberance of youth.

"Go on," said Bet. "Tell about Santa Claus."

"Santa Claus," explained Mrs. Gregory in her words-of-one-syllable voice, "lives in the far, far North, where it is always ice and snow, and every Christmas Eve he harnesses his reindeer——"

"Only one?" asked Bet in an injured tone. "Last year he had four."

"Reindeer is plural," said Mrs.

Gregory. "It means any number of them."

"What's pooral?" asked Bob.

Bet nudged him to be still. The best of the Santa Claus joke was to come, but Bob rebelled.

"I want to know what's pooral!" he declared.

"It means more than one," explained Mrs. Gregory.

"How many more?" he asked.

"Any number more," said Mrs. Gregory with resignation. "One more, or two more, or three more."

"More what?" he queried earnestly.

"More anything," said Mrs. Gregory. "More people, more reindeer, more apples."

"I want an ap—" Bob began, but Bet put her hand over his mouth.

"You don't!" she declared. "You're full up to the neck with apples now. Go on!"

Mrs. Gregory continued.

"So when Christmas comes," she said, "Santa Claus harnesses his six reindeer to his big, big sleigh, and fills the sleigh with candy and toys and presents, and he cracks his whip, and away the reindeer dash, gallop-a-trot, gallop-a-trot——"

Bet looked at Bob to express the joy that this unseemly levity of her mother gave her, and Bob understood.

"Do it some more," he urged.

Mrs. Gregory smiled on him sweetly. She did not guess the reason of Bob's pleasure. She was one of those excellent mothers who never believe their babies are more than babies until the day when wedding bells insist upon it.

"Gallop-a-trot, gallop-a-trot, gallop-a-trot," she continued.

"Don't forget the bells," Bet reminded her.

"And the bells," said Mrs. Gregory, "go jing-a-ling, jing-a-ling, jing-a-ling."

Bob nodded his head.

"That's enough bells," he said.

"And Santa Claus drives his team right over the house-tops, and when he comes to a house where a good child lives he shouts 'Whoa!' to his team,

and he *jumps* out of his sleigh and *pops* down the chimney and leaves a lot of nice things for the good little boy and girl."

"But if they're bad he don't leave anything. You remember that!" Bet cautioned to Bob.

"And what Santa Claus likes best of all is to see the little boys and girls be generous. And everybody tries to help Santa Claus, because he has so many places to go and so many presents to give. That is why papa and mama give presents to Bob and Bet, and everyone; but no one has to give unless they wish. So now I am going to give each of you a whole dollar to do just what you please with, and if you wish you can buy things for yourselves, but I think Santa Claus would like it best if you made others happy with your money."

"That's all," said Bet promptly.

"Now you and me go off and decide to spend our dollars. We always do."

They sought the quiet of their nursery, and seated themselves comfortably on the old green couch.

"Well," said Bet, "it was just like last year. Only last year you were too little to be foolish. You talk very foolish now. But maybe you'll get over it."

Bob accepted the criticism as his just due, and was grateful for the suggestion of possible improvement in the future.

"Do you believe in Santy Claus?" he asked.

"No," said Bet. "Do you?"

"Yes," said Bob.

"Why?" Bet asked scornfully.

"He's Uncle Frank," Bob explained.

"I saw him when his beard burned off last year."

"Do you believe in that 'jingle-jingle, gallop-a-trot'?" asked Bet.

"No," said Bob.

"Why not?" Bet asked.

"Do you?" inquired Bob.

"No," Bet declared. "Not even a child would believe in that."

"Why didn't you tell mama so?" asked Bob. "You let her think you did."

"It makes her feel good," said Bet. "She's like that. So's papa. Christmas is lots of fun for them. They must have had a good time Christmas before we came to bother them."

"Did we come to bother them?" asked Bob in surprise.

"We came. And we bother. It's the same thing either way."

"They bother us," Bob pleaded in defense.

"That's because they don't know any better," said Bet. "We bother because we like to make things lively. So we are wicked. How are you going to spend your dollar?"

"At the store," said Bob. "How are you?"

"We've got to buy things for them," said Bet sadly. "We don't want to, but we've got to. It's the rule. If we don't we get talked to and cried over. So it's best for us to spend it that way."

"I'm going to spend mine all in one bunch," said Bob. "I never spent a whole dollar in a bunch."

"And you won't this time," Bet declared. "We make lists. We put down names of everybody we have to buy for, and then we go and buy. I have to put your name on my list. And you put mine on your list."

"Why?" asked Bob.

"It's rules. Christmas rules. At Christmas you do everything you don't want to. I don't want to buy anything for you. I'd throw the money away before I'd do that."

Bob cheerfully admitted this.

"But I have to," continued Bet, "I find out what you don't want, and I buy it for you. And you have to thank me for it. That's some consolation."

She mused over this a moment.

"What don't you want most of anything in the world?" she asked.

Bob studied the matter deeply.

"Musical-tops," he decided. "I've got two."

"All right," said Bet, "I'll get you another. You can get me one, too. I don't like them. When I thank you for mine, I'll make a face at you."

"What do we do with the tops?" asked Bob.

"We don't do anything," Bet explained. "Papa plays with them. He enjoys them. He sits and plays with them and enjoys them. And we stand 'round and help him be amused. He plays with them for weeks and weeks, until they won't music any more."

"What'll we get for mama?" Bob asked.

"Glasses to wear on her nose," she stated without hesitation. "I saw them when I was downtown. They're ten cents. There's a box full of them in the store where we buy the ten-cent things. Some of them are rusty. They have blue glass in them. They're lots of fun. When you have them on everything looks different. You get a pair for her too, and she'll give them back to us after she's been joyful over them."

"Yes," said Bob, "let's."

"And papa likes games and toys, so I'm going to buy him a pair of bracelets."

"Is bracelets games?" Bob asked in surprise.

Bet laughed. "No, of course not! That's why. If they was I'd never get them back. The way to get a giving bless is to give something you get back again. What," she asked suddenly, "do you think a klidescope is?"

"Why?" asked Bob.

"Because you're going to get one. I heard papa say so."

Bob's enthusiasm waned.

"I argue it's to wear," he declared.

"I argue it's not to wear," said Bet.

"It is," said Bob.

"It is not," said Bet.

"It is," repeated Bob.

"If I didn't know any more about a klidescope than you do, I'd be still and not argue," said Bet. For emphasis she pushed his head with the flat of her hand. His head hit the wall with a thump and on the rebound he grasped Bet by her curls, and they rolled off the couch together and mixed up in their usual whole-souled

manner. Each had two hands clasped in the other's hair, and they pulled with all their strength. The tears stood in their eyes, but they scorned to weep. Finally Bob uttered the cry of defeat. "Quit!" he called, and Bet arose and shook out her crumpled skirts. Bob remained flat on his back, kicking his heels against the floor.

"Come on!" said Bet, "let's go look at 'em."

It was a temptation that for a week had been irresistible to Bob. It was a deadly sin and proportionately pleasurable, and Bob clambered to his feet eagerly.

The nursery opened upon a narrow porch with a low railing, and this was forbidden ground; but it had been trespassed upon so often that it was uninteresting. Another room opened upon the narrow porch. It had no door, but there was a low window, and Bet led the way. The two climbed in at the window and tiptoed carefully across the soft rug to the closet in the corner. She opened the door and peered in. Bob gravely followed her. There were new toys there. The closet was full of them. All had been wrapped at one time, but here and there in the wrappings small holes had been torn, through which the contents could be guessed.

"Nothing new today," said Bet.

"No," said Bob, "nothing new."

"They're slow this year," Bet explained. "They must be having a hard time. Maybe money's scarce. There's nothing I want, yet."

"No," echoed Bob, "nothing I want, yet."

They closed the closet door softly, and stole out of the window, which they closed carefully.

"Oh, my," said Bet, throwing herself on the couch in mock weariness, "I'll be glad when it's all over."

"Yes," said Bob.

"Then when we get any money we can get what we want with it," Bet said. "Except Sunday pennies to heathen."

"What's heathen?" asked Bob.

"They're naked," said Bet, "and we give our pennies to get them clothes, but they're always naked. You can't get much clothes for a penny."

"Do the heathen have Christmas?" asked Bob.

"No, they don't. If they did," she said scornfully, remembering the view of the forbidden closet, "they'd get clothes. They'd get leggin's, Santy Claus would come, with his plural reindeers, gallop-a-trot, jing-a-ling-jing, and give them leggin's and musical-tops. If they was good heathen they would. That's why they're bad. They know better."

"Let's us be bad!" proposed Bob. It was a brilliant thought.

Bet remained listlessly on the couch.

"We can't," she declared positively.

"They say we can, but we can't. No matter what we do, we're good when Christmas comes. We try and try, but we can't be bad. We are angels, I guess," she added thoughtfully; "we were born that way. It ain't our fault."

"No," said Bob solemnly, "it ain't our fault."

"So we've got to get leggin's and musical-tops and things," she concluded. "Christmas has got to come." She raised her legs in the air and brought them down on the couch with a blow that raised a cloud of dust.

"But once a year," she quoted.



## AN INFANT LINGUIST

**FRIEND**—Bright baby, isn't he?

**PAPA**—Bright? Why, he understands two languages—English and baby talk.



## BOHEA-MIA

TEA is not my kind of toddy;  
 I prefer a stronger drink—  
 Something that will make a body  
 Bright and better in a wink.  
 Still, at five o'clock, I often  
 See Myrtilla, and I see  
 That her tricks are bound to soften  
 Me.

She is such a charming Hebe!  
 I prefer her to the old;  
 So whatever kind the tea be  
 I can drink it, cups untold!  
 Jove on Mount Olympus stayed for  
 Nectar, but I'm sure that he  
 Knew no tippie such as made for  
 Me.

Likewise, I adore Myrtilla  
 Desperately, as I should;  
 If her brewing makes me ill, a  
 Something makes me call it good.  
 I've no doubt these frequent drinks of  
 Tea with nerves do not agree,  
 But the tea shows what she thinks of  
 Me.

So I yield me to the tonic,  
 If a man may call it so;  
 But before my case is chronic  
 I shall ask her "Yes?" or "No?"  
 Since she holds the tempting cup to  
 Help young Cupid on a spree,  
 It is evidently up to  
 Me!

FELIX CARMEN.



## A CORRECTION

LUCY—Charley says that if I do not accept him he will put a bullet in his  
 brain.  
 MAY—He means in his head.

# LITTLE JOURNEYS

By H. G. Dwight

THERE is a literature which begins to assume such portentous proportions that those who keep pace with its advances have time for little else. Indeed, one marvels, in our day of predigested nourishment, that no man has yet availed himself of the future awaiting the compiler of anthologies in this field. The omission may be traceable to the fact that the literature in question is perhaps more elusive of description than any other. It is not quite travel. It is not quite history. It is not quite biography. And even at the risk of seeming to drag in a smart phrase by the ears one must say that it is not quite literature. It clings to the skirts of literature—this gossip, more often pleasant than unpleasant, by people who have been less conspicuous about those who have been more so. Its chief concern is with the Birth-place and the Tomb. From the Casual Residence, however, or the Fateful Spot, it does not turn. Occasionally in truth it deals with so vivid a fact as the Personal Impression.

For my own part, I am an insatiable devourer of such pabulum. I cling to the skirts of literature as tightly as I may. In the first place, I am an American, and Americans above all other men are given to this species of manufacture. Having no past of our own we dedicate prodigies of romance to that of other people. But, in the second place, I am by nature the most sentimental man in the world. Scenes that have witnessed great events, objects which have been touched by important persons, individuals about whom hovers some aura of celebrity,

have for me an inordinate interest. It makes no difference what persons or what events may be concerned. I am of a perfect catholicity in the matter. Personality to me is naught and fame is all; as evidence of which I might say that the Malibran Theatre and the Hotel Danieli, in the pleasant city of Venice, are equally dear to me on account of their respective associations with Marco Polo and the *affaire* Sand-De Musset. And, exactly to the same degree, I shall never forgive myself for having traveled, some years since, an entire day on the same boat with Zola and Bjørnsen without once suspecting the propinquity of greatness.

The case happens to be one in which a congenial disposition has never been in danger of atrophy for lack of exercise. It is one of my proudest traditions that my first visit to the town just mentioned was passed in a *palazzo* once occupied by Goethe. I was four years old, to be sure, and knew less about Goethe than I do now—which is very little. Neither do I remember anything of the visit itself, save the purchase of a tin gondola upon which I cut my finger, and a violent access of tears caused by the firing of the sunset gun. But the pregnant coincidence that Goethe and I spent our first Venetian days under the same roof—at an interval of some ninety years—is nowise vitiated by such paltry circumstances.

I cherish, too, the memory of a first Personal Impression. It has haunted me ever since with the immminence of a pun which I am never quite able to turn, about the bird in the hand and the two in the bush. The per-

sonage in question was Mrs. Bishop, that charming gossip and intrepid wanderer, who is perhaps better remembered by her maiden name of Isabella Bird. She had just completed one of her longest journeys, in the final stage of which she had been robbed at night of all her belongings. A consequence of this misfortune not the least embarrassing was that her wardrobe had been reduced beyond the limits prescribed by civilization; and had not her return thereto happened to involve an encounter with Mr. and Mrs. Marion Crawford, the poor lady might have passed uncomfortable days. As it was, Mrs. Crawford came to her rescue until such time as the dress-makers of the place could complete their hurry order. It was at this juncture that I, of the order of beings who should be seen but not heard, passed in the wonderful lady's presence a week-end which I shall not soon forget. Not only did there hang about her the romance of strange countries through which she had come—she, in those days, brought the latest news from Thibet—but her vesture had a tantalizing interest of its own, connected with other romances of which I was just beginning to know the spell. So in later days it has always been a matter of pride with me that, although I have never seen Mr. Crawford, I have at least seen some of his wife's frocks!

To the same period belongs my first Tomb. I pride myself that it was something of a rarity in annals of this nature, being that of Joshua, the son of Nun. It may not universally be known that this Old Testament worthy lies buried on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus, within sight of the blue Symplegades. (Why blue I have never been able to determine; but poetry will have them so, and so will I.) At all events, he lies, the ancient Hebrew, on top of a little mountain commanding the entrance to the Black Sea. A Genoese castle crumbles magnificently to ruin on the wind-bared slopes not far away, in disdain of the modern order whose guns skulk along the water's edge. And to the

south, its white half lost in green, an imperial pleasure-house looks down on the vivid strait winding cityward between hanging gardens. But I wander from Joshua. He reposes beneath a mound some sixty feet in length triply guarded against the intrusion of a too-curious world by iron railings and shrubberied walls and an order of brown-capped dervishes. Some of them will tell you that the holy man's head alone is in their custody. Whether this be so, or how any part of him happened to stray so far from the Promised Land, is more than I can explain. I only know that as one of my earliest celebrities I owe him treasured hours not a few—of sentimental meditation diversified by scramblings on thyme-scented hills.

It is clear enough that my youthful opportunities were, for one of my nationality, of a high order. But, by that perversity of fate which gives to one the Amati and to another the hand to play it, I have never been able to profit by them. It is not that I, any more than the buyer of the Amati, am without appreciation. I read with flushed cheek of the adventure conceived in reverence and carried unflinching to its end. I mark enthusiastically the obstacles which but sweetened the final reward. I approve—none with deeper sympathy—the emotions which welled up in the pilgrim's breast on approaching and on leaving the goal of his desire. And it seems to me, at the moment, that I, too, might contribute to these annals of devotion. But—I don't know—there is about me a fatal inconsequence. I lack the singleness of eye indispensable to the Little Journeyman. I am too easily diverted from my purpose. I am also too easily abashed, too easily cast down by those rebuffs which, especially in foreign lands, beset the path of the pilgrim. Then if I am the most sentimental man in the world, my sentiment is unhappily tempered with cynicisms. I know not whether the first of them be an extreme frugality, or an extreme unwillingness to be caught in doing the obvious thing. At any

rate, I scorn guides and carriages, and I would rather die than be seen in too frequent consultation of a red book; which is no attitude for a devotee. And all this is supplemented by a vicious tendency which has only been encouraged by my remote attachment to the robe of literature—whose highest achievement it is to recount what never happened.

I have sometimes thought to excuse these weaknesses by saying that in the air of Italy, where most of my *Little Journeys* have taken place, there is something to wean a man from the sharpness of his desire; and that every step in that enchanted land, desultory though it be, is a tribute to the past. But there are moments when I am forced to acknowledge that I put too heavy a pack off my own shoulder. As, for instance, when I realize that, although I have spent months in Venice with no other intention than that of visiting the palaces where Browning and Wagner died, I have never done so—to the mortification of all Perfect Wagnerites and Browning Societies whatsoever. Or that when I passed through the water-haunted valleys where Titian was born I turned back from his door, simply because I saw there a lady whom I suspected of speaking my own tongue. And oftener still my delinquencies have been of an order to prove that the imagination is like the scriptural grain of mustard—"which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown it is the greatest of herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

Ferrara, the grass-grown ducal city, is for me witness to this effect. The truth of the matter is that I have spent just fifty-seven minutes in Ferrara, between trains. But having used that time in driving through the wide streets that have so much an air of being empty of pageants forever—more, having indeed alighted once or twice for a glimpse of cathedral glooms or of old red castle yards, what is easier than to reconstruct for myself—

with a little help from Baedeker, Byron and Symonds—an impression of Ariosto's house and Tasso's cell and Parisina's place of execution? Of Castelfranco, the so-called birthplace of Giorgione, I give my friends descriptions more moving still. My acquaintance with Castelfranco is at once more and less complete than my acquaintance with Ferrara. I have never spent fifty-seven minutes in Castelfranco, nor, indeed, so much as one. I have not even gone through it on the train—according to which mode of reckoning my experience of Ferrara would extend considerably over the hour. But I have looked out many days and nights from the towered hill of Asolo, twelve miles away, whence the roofs of Castelfranco make a very appreciable blur in the haze of the plain. And I have thought so many things of the painter who appeals to me perhaps more than any other because he is more mythic than any other, and have so often promised myself that I would go down to see his only absolutely authentic picture, that I feel far more intimate with his moated town than with many another whose streets I have trod in more palpable fashion.

There are also places which I have visited, like so many of my less sentimental countrymen but without their excuse, from the car window. The Euganean Hills, sacred to Petrarch and Shelley, are an example. Indeed, I have known them so long from afar—whether as the Amber Isles of the Lombard plain or as the strange black cones of a Venetian sunset—that to rattle between them on smoky trains, to admire certain castles that theatrically stride their slopes and certain cypresses that prick their sky, always seems like the very last familiarity. And, somehow, I have never yet set foot in Este or Arquà. Much in the same way have I paid tribute to the genius of Tennyson, master of my youth. The Isle of Wight was long for me the Delos of modern lore, and had I chanced to set foot on British soil at any moment during my years

of indiscretion, thither must I instantly have flown. As it is, I only bear with me an impression caught from an ocean steamer—of white cliffs and a long green land, dissolving into a mist bejeweled with evening lamps. How much has it been made to bear, that impression!

The most scandalous case of this kind is my journey to Pescara, the home of D'Annunzio. I beg leave to state that this poet, for reasons which I shall not now take time to go into, is for me one of the most interesting figures in contemporary literature. Such an effect did the stories in his early "Terra Vergine" have upon me—a vein reopened with more art and less power in "Le Novelle della Pescara"—that I resolved to take up my dwelling-place forever in the Abruzzi. Other regions claimed me, however. But when at last I found occasion to go from Naples to the North I bought my ticket by the East coast in order to carry out my ancient whim. Only—I blush to say it!—after a late summer afternoon in the gorges of the Calore and the Cervaro, with their little old gray windy cities beetling high against the blue; then after a moonlight evening so close to the Adriatic that the rhythm of the water beat through the noise of the train, something mingled of Italy and of motion got into my blood that was too strong for me. And when we stopped at Pescara, toward two in the morning, I refused to leave my compartment window. I told myself that I would have another chance when I came back. And I did return the same way, swearing to friends and foes alike that I was going to spend a month in Pescara. But I spent the month somewhere else, and passed Pescara again in the night—that time unromantically unconscious of it. So the place is to me more unsubstantial than ever—a mere *intermezzo* of ethereal white houses and narrow black streets and tangled rigging and a shining river, in a long dream-coast spinning between shadow-mountains and a moonlit sea.

Although I am far from desiring to

give the impression that all my sentimental journeys have been of this cursory nature, candor compels me to confess that one destiny appears to preside over them all. I could recount instances without number of pilgrimages conceived in all enthusiasm of spirit and embarked upon with every apparent prospect of success, which yet, for one reason or another, have failed of result. I have traveled to Salem for the sake of Hawthorne and, after vainly inquiring my way through a babel of Latin dialects that gave me an altogether unexpected impression of that Puritan town, I have been frightened from the so-called House of Seven Gables by a horrific old lady in curls who sat on the porch surrounded by strange objects of commerce. I have stood for hours before a certain window of the Grand Hotel in Christiania, waiting for Ibsen, who, according to local advices, would infallibly spend his morning in the café: in vain! I have explored the wrong bank of the Arno—wrong in the sense that the side of the *Signoria* must be the right one—for at least two entire summer mornings, in order to look up at Casa Guidi windows—only to come away with purpose unaccomplished because the sun was too hot and the Boboli Gardens were too cool. Similarly, on no less than four separate sojourns in Naples, have I sought without success the tombs of Virgil and Leopardi. It is, alas, too true that with Virgil I have merely the bowing acquaintance of one's school-days—which I, for one, never cared to press; while of Leopardi I know little more than that he was a cripple and that he had an unhappy love affair. But they were both poets, and that is enough for me. Moreover, they are both buried on the same side of Naples, and while sentiment dictates that they should be paid the tribute of a tear, convenience and Baedeker point out the advisability of their being settled together. But I have never discovered either. The glooms of Piedigrotta, the gardens of Posilipo, the bay of Pozzuoli—who



can resist them? Indeed, I fear I never really hoped to succeed in my quest. It would have deprived me of a worthy motive for idling about the most enchanting cape in the world.

If this narrative of futility grow monotonous to the reader, he might well marvel at the writer for not having been similarly overcome long before arriving at the point of reminiscence. It is indeed strange how slow a man may be to learn from experience. Strange, too, it sometimes is how one experience should serve better than another to open his eyes. For myself, however, I have lately undergone one such. At last I sadly begin to realize that Little Journeys are not for me. I presume I shall continue to make them. It is a habit like another, and with me it was formed too early in life to be broken now. But henceforth I shall know from the beginning that any such adventure must necessarily end in confusion.

This consciousness is the sole result of a recent attempt to visit the pine wood of Ravenna. I had been in the ancient town of Rimini, whither, of course, I had gone for the sake of Francesca. Of Francesca, however, I discovered but mediocre memorials.

There was a problematical Malatesta castle—now fallen to the sad uses of a municipal dungeon. There was also a Malatesta church by no means problematical, for the arms and cipher of one Sigismondo of that house, and his lady Isotta, were its most conspicuous adornments. Although of the cipher, an S and an I intertwined, I have to confess that it was problematic enough for its first message to my American mind to be that—*horresco referens*—of my native dollar! But Rimini proved to contain solidier attractions, which were the more welcome because totally unexpected and because the fervor of the canicular was intolerable upon the land. These, namely, were very agreeable sea baths. And I suppose I might include the *villeggianti* frequenting the same, since among them I found Paolos and Francescas, as yet uncorrupted by any taint of foreign invasion, who

went far to compensate me for the slender archeological returns of my pilgrimage.

Your Little Journeyman, however, is never long content with the mere contemporary. The vicinity of Ravenna, and the tomb of him who first gave Rimini her notoriety, were more to me than any actual *Stabilimento ai Bagni*. Ravenna had long called me from afar. Her history was no small lure—although I did not happen to be conversant with it. But to a gentleman of literary proclivities the names of Dante, Boccaccio, Dryden and Byron were more compelling than those of Theodoric and Honoria. Moreover, had not the poet of the Bleeding Heart, himself no amateur in cities, declared Ravenna to be the most attractive of Italian towns? So to Ravenna I proceeded, thinking that if Byron had spent two years there so sedentary a person as myself might easily spend ten. And anything that I might miss in the waves of the Adriatic the coolness of the storied pines would more than make up to me.

It would make quite a story in itself—my pilgrimage to the city of Dante and Byron. Conceive how terrific was the afternoon of my journey when I admit that I remained entirely oblivious of the incident of crossing the Rubicon.

When, eventually, I gained from Baedeker a consciousness of my omission, I felt that I would have been spared many a painful question with regard to Cæsar's hesitancy about crossing that celebrated stream had I been aware in my youth that the matter of identity lay in dispute between two rival brooks of Romagna. But I could not have seen either, for a portly matron had drawn the shades of the compartment lest her boy, a lusty ragamuffin who snored in a corner, be smitten by a *colpo d'aria*. It was only by accident that I happened to catch sight of certain gigantic pines quivering like mirages beside a glassy stream, when we crawled at last into the vicinity of the ancient city.

There are in Ravenna two principal

establishments which maintain themselves at the expense of the helpless traveler—the Grand Hotel Byron and the Albergo alla Spada d'Oro. It was evident as I alighted at the station, the only Anglo-Saxon so to do, that some outward indication marked me in the eyes of the bystanders for the former. Indeed, it was with an inward pang that I shook my head at the expectant emissary thereof, and so laid myself open to the attacks of the Sword of Gold. For I love to patronize the most pretentious hotel of a place, if thereby I may prove myself in the sight of the inhabitants to be a person of consequence. I, however, had come to Ravenna with high thoughts in my head. Not only did my contemplated stay of ten years recommend a more economical residence than the Byron, but my scorn of the obvious plainly warned me from it. Moreover, I had an instinct that the spirit of the occasion called upon me to be as bohemian as possible. So I brushed my way into the open, caused my luggage to be put into a cab, and gave orders that left every mouth agape:

"To the Trattoria al Pellegrino."

Upon this, the most solemn of all my pilgrimages, should I not be quartered at the Inn of the Pilgrim? I must say, though, that my heart misgave me a trifle when we rattled past the archway of the Spada d'Oro, through which I caught a glimpse of cool white tables scattered about a green court. There was something in the oppressive twilight to make me feel that August, perhaps, was not quite the month for an excursion into bohemia. The fact is, I fear, that I am not really of that cheerful land. I prefer a good dinner to a bad one. I like this year's clothes when I can get them. I am more at ease in the company of old ladies who go to church than in that of young ones who are not particular about it—and some other things. But Literature, my liege lady, is popularly reputed to be of bohemian origin. In homage to her, therefore, duty compels me to

cross from time to time the borders of her country.

My heart misgave me yet again when I was set down at the Trattoria al Pellegrino. The legend over the door resolved itself for me, in the fading light, into the well-worn words: "*Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate.*" Yet I must say for the Trattoria al Pellegrino that it wore a more definite air of spruceness than one could expect in bohemia. And there was something rather picturesque about the big, low room paved with stone, which gave upon an interior court of vines and which seemed to partake indiscriminately of the functions of lobby, office, *salon*, dining-room and kitchen. As I studied its refreshing gloom for further signs of occupation there presently emerged to me: (a) a lady who bore a striking corporeal resemblance to a circus celebrity of my youth, known on the bills as "Beautiful Beulah, the Human Mountain, the Largest Lump of Loveliness that ever Lived"; (b) a small and prancing gentleman, who appeared to stand in some marital relation to the above; (c) a buxom married daughter, bare of foot and fair of countenance, in whom my romantic eye was not too depressed to detect a possible Guiccioli; (d) the husband of the same—a black-browed nonentity, and (e) Emilio, a younger son. It was a case of five against one, and I knew that I was lost. Nevertheless, I engaged these personages in that preliminary parley which is requisite to the peaceful termination of any Latin tenancy, but which has never yet availed to guard me against parting surprises. And then we all, with the sole exception of the Human Mountain, adjourned in the wake of Emilio and a candle to inspect the upper regions of the eating-house which served as *alloggi*.

And very pleasant *alloggi* they might have been, those brick-paved chambers opening upon the vines of the court, if— But I draw a veil upon the torments of that night. They were to me a foretaste of the fate which Dante has meted out to those who are

neither fish nor flesh nor good red herring. I, who might have put up at the civilized Byron; I, who might even have spent the second half of the night like the first—in absorbing ices at the Café Byron—I could only repeat the lines from the third canto of the “Inferno”:

*Questi sciaurati, che mai non fur vivi,  
Erano ignudi e stimolati molto  
Da mosconi e da vespe ch'eran ivi.*

For the night was too hot for one to lie covered, and the mosquitoes were too terrible for one to lie uncovered, and mosquito nets form no part of the furniture of bohemia.

I will not ask the reader, either, to come with me through the brazen day that at last succeeded that sleepless night. The forest of my dreams, which I had conceived as somehow forming an integral part of Ravenna, proved to lie at a distance of five miles across the plain. Moreover, there was a fury of morning sun which discouraged the consummation of my pilgrimage until a more poetic hour. So I wandered through the narrow stone streets in search of what they might offer. It may have been the languor, partly of weariness and partly of the dog-days, in which I walked; but they seemed sterner than other Italian streets, to lack the indefinable touch of grace. And there was the strangest contrast between the glare and severity of them, and the dimness and splendor of certain interiors into which I found my way. Nor in it was there anything of the contrast between present and past which one feels in places where the roofs of yesterday have remained for the shelter of today. I remember no place which has given me quite such an impression of age and of abandonment. There were no pictures of modernity to discountenance the solemn old mosaics of a thousand years ago. The tides of life seemed to have ebbed away with the sea tides of imperial days. Within and without were the same silence, the same melancholy. I might have been the first to discover again a city of secret splen-

dors bleaching forgotten in its miasmic plain.

By which the reader will perceive that I can sometimes be as fanciful as any Little Journeyman. Let him not, however, take my flights too literally. He should know that at least one sound broke the silence of the centuries, that one voice was heard in desolate Ravenna. The sound was of the crackling of whips; the voice that of Nastagio degli Onesti. I paid little heed to him at first, for I am inured to the persecutions of cab drivers. Then, too, I was more often at ease under some green and gold Byzantine dome than footsore in the burning streets. But Nastagio dogged me like fate. He waited for me outside every church. He infallibly discovered by what exits I sought escape. He pursued me the whole day through, until, at last, I fell into his toils. It was in the Piazza Byron, that square so rich in memorials for the Little Journeyman, where the tomb of the Florentine exile lies opposite the empty window of the English one. To me, then, Nastagio, hat in hand:

“Lord, for five francs him will I take to Sant’ Apollinare in Classe, to the tomb of Theodoric, and to the most celebrated piney wood. Him I tell the just price because he is English. I ask no more. I take no less.”

I never was the man to shrink from a bargain. I looked upon Nastagio, and there was that in his broad Romagnole countenance which, taken with his frank mode of address, convinced me that he was of the Onesti. Moreover, it was now an hour when one might safely contemplate the transit of the plain. The vehicle of my tempter, it is true, had seen better days. So, I hoped, had his cockaded horse. But anything more modern would have been out of keeping with the spirit of my adventure. Accordingly I closed with Nastagio and was soon outside the city gate.

I shall not linger upon our somewhat leisurely progress toward the wood. So chafing was it to my eager spirit that Nastagio had some diffi-

culty in making me stop at the lonely church among the marshes—sole relic of a haven where once the imperial galleys moored—which was the first stipulation of our agreement. At its sad old mosaics, at its famous Byzantine grille, I cast a hasty glance and then urged Nastagio on. Already the dark fringe of the plain began to break into a silhouette of columnar trunks and interwoven boughs. From them peasants came, filing cityward over the long white causeway with the picturesque implements of their work. In the glamour of the late afternoon their faces had a high Roman look that went with my lyric mood. My pulse beat faster as I figured to myself the avenues of stately green which Symonds has so well described—where Byron rode alone, where Dante paced in exile, where the lovesick Nastagio of Boccaccio's tale surprised the ghostly chase.

Finally the Nastagio of this tale turned off the highway into a sandy road leading to the nearest trees. Inwardly I praised him for this short cut from my impatience, although our panting steed betrayed evident signs of not relishing the change. But we soon reached a coppice of scrub oaks and adolescent evergreens, from which trails radiated to deeper parts of the forest. Then Nastagio threw off the mask. He stopped. He turned around. He waved his hand toward a sickly Christmas tree. And he uttered with an air that would have done honor to a court chamberlain:

"Behold the pine wood!"

I looked at Nastagio and Nastagio looked at me. He even went so far as to repeat the majestic wave of the hand and the announcement:

"*Ecco la pineta!*"

Far be it from me to insinuate that I cut a creditable figure in the scene that ensued. Even had Nastagio been of my own nationality I doubt whether my tongue could have done justice to my feelings. As it was I merely gave vent to a choleric sputtering, in the face of which Nastagio was imperturbable. Not only did he entirely sur-

pass me in dignity, but I felt that he made out a much better case for himself than I did against him. Was not that a pine? he asked, pointing to the Christmas tree. He was very sorry if I was not pleased. It was not his fault if pines did not grow. He had done his best for me. Other *forestieri* had always been pleased, and this was where he brought them. Of course, the *pineta* was very large. There were many parts to it. Naturally, however, I had understood when he made his reasonable offer that he did not propose to drive me all over Romagna for five francs. If I liked to walk a little he would wait for me. It would rest the horse, too. But sunset was near, and one was very likely to catch the fever among the marshes, and unless I was stronger than most people I would better think of returning to town.

So it was that I, poor, passionate pilgrim, witnessed the collapse of my brightest dream! Another, I presume, would have driven Nastagio to the wood at pistol-point. As for me, that would have been a barren victory. I recognized the hand of fate. It has poisoned for me too many cups, and I allowed myself to be dragged unresisting from the very threshold of attainment. As we toiled back through the sand I could see a file of great pines spreading their darkness against the ardent sky. Then, at the highway, I turned from them forever. The road now was a primrose path between the purple fields. But I had no eyes for the sunset. In my bitterness I only became aware at last of drawing up at the Inn of the Pilgrim. It was twilight, almost twenty-four hours from the moment when I had first driven to the door. And again the five emerged from the gloom. But this time I said, without stirring from the carriage:

"Bring me my bags and my bill. I am going away."

Four of them thereupon withdrew, marveling, to execute my commands. The daughter, the possible Guiccioli, remained to stand guard over me.

She also smiled agreeably in the dusk.

"No, my dear," I murmured, "you won't do. You greatly overestimated the sweetness of that smile when you imagined you could keep me here ten years."

I caught my train—the one by

which I had arrived the night before. Nastagio looked to that. But when he suggested that he deserved a double fare for having gone to so much extra trouble, I intimated with some distinctness that he might consider the Trattoria al Pellegrino as a substitute for the tomb of Theodoric.



## REINCARNATION

THE flower you gather, blossomed long ago  
 Warmed by past sunshine, jeweled with the rain  
 Of bygone years; the river's lispings strain  
 Which now you hear, was once the sylvan flow  
 Of a lost stream; the very winds which blow  
 Have come and gone, will come and go again;  
 And where the primal verdure decked the plain  
 Year after year the later grasses grow.

And thus with every line that lovers trace,  
 However dear or passionate the word  
 The selfsame thought, in a dead bosom stirred,  
 Has brought the roses to some woman's face;  
 And all the worship which my rhyming brings  
 Is but an echo of forgotten things.

ERNEST MCGAFFEY.



## LOATH TO GO

"WHY, you haven't spent this whole afternoon at Mrs. Shorewell's, have you?"  
 "Yes; they said such horrid things about everyone who left that I did not dare come home."



## A PRACTICAL QUESTION

SINSHEIMER, JR.—Give me three cents, fader; I want to buy an apple from der fruit man.

SINSHEIMER, SR.—Make a face at him, Jakey, und maybe he'll throw one at you.



## GALLIC EXULTATION

FLUSHED with triumph, see him sit,  
 Trifling with his *canapé*.  
 Surely he has made a hit  
 Down upon the Street today.

Or, perchance, those beaming eyes,  
 Gaining luster from the heart,  
 Signify he's won a prize  
 In the matrimonial mart.

This the cause: with oral wrench,  
 He, ere ordering his food,  
 Asked for Vermouth Sec in French—  
 And the waiter understood!

C. F. ROOPER.



## MAMMON'S SWAY

HARRIET—Does Mr. Penfield still write poetry, now that he has come into his money?

ETHEL—Gracious, no! He now burns the midnight oil in an auto.



## SERVED HIM RIGHT

“HE proposed for a joke, didn't he?”  
 “Yes, and she accepted him just to show him that it was no joke to propose to her.”



## A CLEVER GIRL

MRS. SHARPLEY—Did she captivate the professor by speaking several languages?

SHARPLEY—No, by letting *him* speak *one*.

# A DAY WITH LYDDY

By Theodosia Garrison

DOROTHEA lay in the hammock in the summer-house, a feat which, to the uninitiated, suggested the advisability of a balancing pole—her canvas sand-shoes being on a direct line with her tousled head, caused her body to approach the direct lines of the letter V.

One tanned hand held a little, green-covered Tennyson in a nice line of vision above her nose as she intoned appreciatively the sorry rhyme of one Edward Gray, who, meeting Emma Moreland on yonder way, inquired casually as to the fate of a certain Ellen Adair.

There was one verse in Edward's lament that seized Dorothea by the throat; it suggested to her all that was beautiful, mysterious and lofty.

Love may come, and love may go,  
And fly like a bird, from tree to tree;  
But I will love no more, no more,  
Till Ellen Adair come back to me.

This verse was not only affecting but adaptable, seeing that one might oust Ellen Adair, as it were, and insert the name of the person with whom one was fascinated at the time. Dorothea, entertaining at the moment a hopeless passion for a neighbor of some forty years, intrusted the summer-house roof with the confidence that she would love no more, no more, till Samuel Stern returned to her. This personal touch was enchanting. She closed the book and repeated the stanza, her eyes roving seaward, her small being unconsciously drinking in the beauty of the afternoon.

The tide was out; the fishing-poles that at high tide stood above their heads in water, now waded only ankle

deep. One could almost see the nets dragging from them. The wide beach stretched from dry, gray sand to soft, wet brown where the fringe of tiny waves tumbled and played like white kittens. To look into the sky was like looking deep into a more wonderful, bluer ocean than the one she knew. Great argosies of white clouds sailed majestically across it from the west, and, even while she looked, changed mysteriously to titanic, angelic hosts and huge unaccustomed beasts.

Wherever she looked—and she looked only seaward—came beauty of gold and blue and green to greet her. Landward lay well-kept lawns, orderly wide-verandaed cottages and the famous avenue whereon, at this hour, majestic ladies were tooled in shining victorias.

In other moods it was interesting to sit astride the round gatepost until one was summarily hauled down, and speculate as to the passers' habits and modes of life. Today Dorothea would none of them. Her temperament varied from the pure pagan to the utterly misunderstood. The latter mood ran to poetry and introspection, and this afternoon Dorothea loafed and invited her soul.

"Dorothea!"

With no warning of an approaching presence the voice came suddenly from behind her very head. In such fashion do the Philistines come upon one.

Instinctively Dorothea thrust the green Tennyson beneath her spine, but the movement was vain.

The pretty young mother sat down on the bench that closed the three sides of the summer-house, and re-

garded her daughter reproachfully. In reality she imagined her look to be stern to the verge of harshness.

"Dorothea, you have been reading again. Do you remember that you promised your father that you wouldn't look at a book until Dr. Baker said you might?"

Dorothea nodded. That broken promise weighed no heavier than thistle-down on her soul. She had realized its futility what time she made it.

"Give me the book."

Dorothea surrendered it. The green Tennyson was the pretty mother's own property. Dorothea explained her possession.

"I didn't mean to read—truly. I came here to swing and I found it on the bench. I couldn't help it. Nobody could have helped it, and I only read one—a little one." It seemed superfluous to state that she had read that one several times.

There was a pause. The young mother's heart inclined to sympathy as to a sister soul, but with her daughter's interests at stake she dared not waver.

"Dorothea, I knew a little girl once who had scarlet fever, as you did, and who *would* read when the doctor forbade it. She went blind, quite blind."

"Everybody knew her," said Dorothea airily. Among her relatives that blind child whose case was analogous to her own, seemed to have had an extensive acquaintance.

She swung her short legs over the side of the hammock and began to swing with apparently a total indifference to the subject under discussion. Her mother placed a restraining hand upon her arm. Helplessness at her daughter's callous front showed in her face. The management of Dorothea was a thing from which braver souls might shrink, yet in all respects but two—and on these battle never wavered—Dorothea could be led lamb-like at a touch. Her friends, selected with a critical eye as to their companionable qualities and none whatever as to their surroundings, breeding or refinement, constituted one cause for the defiance of authority; the other

being Dorothea's total disregard of threat or prayer, medicinal or otherwise, concerning the books which for a month past had been forbidden her.

If one could make a starving man realize the enormity of the sin of stealing a loaf, that person might in time induce Dorothea to believe that surreptitious filchings of books from home and abroad were not entirely justifiable. Neither was the picking of the book-case lock—a notable feat accomplished by candlelight with a jackknife and the gas-tongs—an act to be commended. Dorothea would have listened, under protest, but she never would have understood.

In these matters she was apparently swayed by some higher authority than the merely parental. Long since she had gauged, according to their different degrees of resistance, the powers that sought to sway her. Thus, her mother was as wax, her aunt as steel that might be melted, but her father was adamant. On the subject of ocean dips twice daily, the necessity of retiring at eight-thirty and arising at seven, his was an authority to be respected; only on matters social and literary did Dorothea rise to the height of the irresistible force opposing the immovable body.

"Dorothea!" Her mother's tone commanded attention. Dorothea with difficulty brought her wandering mind back from the grave of Ellen Adair. It was strange that one could look straight out to sea and yet seem to be—really be—on a windy hill, very far away, watching a sad young man carve forlorn words on a mossy stone.

Her mother had apparently been speaking for some time to that mere hulk of her left behind in the hammock. However, her closing remark contained the pith of the whole. "And when your father comes tomorrow night, Dorothea, he must know how disobedient you have been all this week—about your opening the book-case and playing with Lyddy Flynn. You know he will be very angry, and"—she nerved her tone—"punish you severely."

"You will tell him?" said Dorothea.

Her tone promptly put her parent in the position of the culprit. She defended herself sadly.

"Isn't it right for him to know?"

Dorothea was a just child, but "yes" stuck in her throat like Macbeth's "Amen."

"You will tell him yourself," said the pretty mother.

She put a tender arm about the sinner in the hammock. This was the hideous part of motherhood, she thought—to keep the dears from doing what they wanted to do; to be forced to discipline when one only wanted them to be happy.

Dorothea accepted the caress icily. To be punished severely meant, first, to be in the dock hearing a hanging judge's opinion of one; and next, to be deprived of mighty joys such as the daily swim, or—torturing thought—the annual picnic to the Highlands due the very next week. To lose that was like being denied Christmas. With a prophetic eye she foresaw her fate.

She refused with dignity an invitation to be read to, and betook herself majestically to the gatepost that commanded a view of the avenue. Little did the stout dowagers and smart matrons who filed before her know that a tragic and misunderstood soul viewed them from that eminence.

The sharp injustice of the world bit at Dorothea's heart. Was she the only being alive who realized that one had to read at intervals, just as one had to eat or sleep? That fudgy doctor and the relatives who followed him, sheep-like, were one and all sinners against nature.

The edict that deprived her of her friend was monstrous. She recalled, with scorn, the divers charges in the indictment against Lyddy. She was not clean—a trifle; she ate with her knife and twisted the king's English into shrill Jerseyese; she rarely combed her hair or changed her dress; she was indecently shod, gartered and pinned together in the rear, and constantly and continually she sniffed as the

clock ticks; she was the daughter of the village garbage man and of a mother whose tongue grew shriller and her temper shorter in proportion to the shoots that multiplied on the Flynn family tree; Lyddy chewed gum, entertained the vaguest ideas as to the use of a handkerchief, and her littlest sister had fits.

Why these trivial details should bar her from one for whom her soul yearned was Dorothea's indignant wonder. In vain had she opposed her family's charges with the enumeration of Lyddy's charms. Lyddy was plucky, she was daring. She could jump from the highest summer-house roof and swim out to the last bathing-pole at high tide. She was ready for any game one suggested. She could run and throw like a boy; also, she could tell beautiful, shuddering stories of peddlers—a murderous race who broke into houses at night and cut throats with one hand while they robbed with the other. Truly, a paragon of companions! Dorothea, on the gatepost, burned with a very flame of loyalty as she thought of her.

In the past she had evaded her father's authority in this direction by craft and cunning and machiavellian designs, but in this week of his absence she had sinned boldly. She had sought Lyddy, in her own bailiwick and spent a glorious day there. She had rafted adventurously on the duck pond, ridden triumphantly on the garbage car, feasted at the family table upon salt pork, which she herself had fished bare-armed from the bottom of the barrel, and she had almost—not quite, since the gods are niggardly of too much joy—seen the littlest sister have a fit. It was at the time when conditions were most favorable and every indication pointed to this entertainment being successfully carried out, that Dorothea had been incontinently seized and carried home by an irate aunt.

When this very exaggeration of defiance was laid beneath the paternal eye it needed no prophet to foretell Dorothea the consequences. Books

could always be obtained unlawfully, but she would be separated from Lyddy as by the width of the ocean.

This larger grief by its very enormity overshadowed the certain lesser punishments to come. No books, no Lyddy, no picnic, probably no swimming for the next week. Was ever black sheep exposed to a more untempered wind than Dorothea?

She kicked the fence dismally and speculated as to the future. This was Tuesday. On Thursday, at this time, she reflected, she would be a disciplined and stricken being; so far as the joys of life went she was as one already dead.

Tuesday—Thursday! Suddenly the light that shines in the eyes of one reprieved sprang to Dorothea's face. Wednesday—tomorrow! A long and glorious tomorrow was before her. Her punishment was sure, but her time was not yet due.

To be punished for less enjoyment than one might have at the same price affronts the truly economical soul. Tomorrow it would be the thrifty Dorothea's business to get her punishment's worth of pure joy.

The red sun was going down in a sullen blur of clouds. The wind had shifted to the east. A little army of storm clouds scuttled across the blue, and the air was strong with salt.

Old John, the man-of-all-work, steering his wheelbarrow up the carriage road, stopped at Dorothea's perch.

"Goin' to blow hard, little missy," he mumbled. They were devoted friends.

Dorothea answered him only with a vague and seraphic smile as she allowed herself to be balanced in the wheelbarrow and trundled to the house. She did not care whether Ellen Adair was dead or not. She was no longer a tragic and misunderstood soul. She was a glorious and unfettered pagan planning iniquitous delights.

All night long the wind raved like a Bedlamite up and down the coast. Dorothea, in her room fronting the sea, listened with a fearful ecstasy.

She could fancy the wind as a gigan-

tic, black-tressed woman with floating garments, a madwoman shrieking her defiance at the clutching rage-swept ocean.

The chairs on the verandas rocked and fell. Shutters slammed and case-ments creaked and groaned. No accustomed conspirator could ask for a better atmosphere wherein to form forbidden deeds.

In the morning the storm still continued—a northeast storm without rain, when the sea is the color of boiling lead, and its waves waver and crash like falling battlements; when the sky is covered with ragged, racing clouds and the wind whips the wave-crests into foam that blows across the sand like thistledown; when the high tide hangs the beach with shining ribbons of smooth, brown seaweed and coral-colored starfish, and with planks and plunder in which one may poke blissfully about for days.

Dorothea's costume, in rapturous times like these, was composed chiefly of garments outgrown the year before, but when she descended to breakfast thus attired disapproval greeted her.

"Lucy Martin's nurse has been here," they told her, "and you are to go and spend the day with Lucy. She has a sore throat and can't go out. As soon as you have breakfast, go up and dress—the blue dress with the sash, Dorothea. And here is a little glass of jelly to take to Lucy."

Dorothea answered only with a request. "Give me the jelly," quoth she, and secured it.

She ate her breakfast meekly, and having resolved upon the role of the totally depraved, felt even a singular joy in the fact that an entirely new deception was to be added to her list.

A day with Lucy Martin, indeed! That meant paper dolls and close communion with one who wept when she was teased, and whose taste in literature had never risen above "Baa, baa, black sheep." Dorothea scorned her.

She left the table, ostensibly to don her fine array.

"Good-bye," she called sweetly from the stairs. "I'll go down the back



way." Which she did indeed, but not precisely in the accustomed fashion.

To climb over the rail of the back veranda, to find oneself on the kitchen-shed, and to drop from there to the water-barrel and thence to the ground, was an easy matter. Dorothea, although hampered with the jelly-glass, accomplished this feat with the agility of a mountain goat.

She skirted three back lawns cautiously before she took to the high-road and across that to the blackberry fields that led to Lyddy.

The joy of life in her veins sent her running with the wind, and she sang lustily as she went. Her red tam-o'-shanter blew from her head and she pursued it madly to Lyddy's very door and entered without ceremony.

The Flynn household epitomized a world of unsystematic activity. Life there boiled like a very witch's caldron. Something was always being cooked, cleaned or eaten. Someone was always being threatened, scolded or punished. Everything was being done and nothing was ever accomplished.

Three children and a ragged dog fell rapturously upon Dorothea as she entered, and Lyddy, with her hands in dish-water and a mound of unwashed dishes before her, beamed a welcome.

Lyddy was small and brown and hard like a dumpling that has been left too long in the oven. Energy showed in her small, sinewy hands and twinkling, bead-like black eyes. She wore a boy's pea-jacket over her short plaid petticoat, and her hair stood out from her head in a stiff, black braid tied at the end with a shoe-string.

Dorothea wasted no time in salutation.

"Where's your mother?" she demanded. "I'm going to ask her to let you come and spend the day with me. I've got a present for her."

"Git out!" said Lyddy skeptically, but her sniffs expressed rapture.

Mrs. Flynn was found in the hen-house and given to understand that Dorothea, as her mother's messenger, conveyed a polite invitation for Lyddy to spend the day as Dorothea's guest.

"And she sent you this," continued the wily one, producing Lucy Martin's jelly.

Mrs. Flynn, convinced and flattered, gave a querulous consent, and the twain tactfully vanished at the word. Mrs. Flynn's instructions as to Lyddy donning her crimson merino and best shoes came to them faintly from afar.

They galloped across country through clover-grown meadows to the sand dunes, down which they promptly rolled with screams of joy.

The air was full of salt and blown, stinging sand; the waves thundered and flung themselves to the very bluff; conversation could be carried on only by exerting one's lung power to the utmost. In this fashion Dorothea conveyed to her friend the program of the day.

"We'll do anything we want to—everything they say they'll punish us for," she shrieked.

"I dare you to go out on the breakwater. I dare you to go as far out as I do."

Lyddy accepted the challenge with derision. "Who's afraid of your old breakwater?" quoth she, and kicked her battered shoes off jubilantly.

Dorothea followed her example. The breakwater and wading without permission being separately forbidden, the combination became a crime delirious.

Dorothea pattered out on the breakwater. The tops of the tightly driven piles that formed it were slippery with sea slime. The waves boiled about it; the spray dashed above it; it shook and trembled at every fresh assault of the waters like a frightened thing. To stand upon it was to possess the tenacious qualities of a cat; to walk upon it little short of a miracle.

Dorothea slipped, staggered and slid to a certain point and retreated with a monster wave bellowing bull-like behind her. Lyddy, taking her turn on all fours, achieved a point beyond Dorothea's.

They dared each other again and again rapturously, until both were breathless and dripping. Then a heavy bit of driftwood among the smaller

flotsam and jetsam that the combers hurtled to shore and snatched back, caught Dorothea's eye and suggested possibilities.

"We'll play it's a baby," she shrieked. "And I'm its mother and you're its nurse, and we've been shipwrecked and we must try to get it. Hurry up!"

"Git who?" said Lyddy.

"Oh, my child! Oh, my baby!" wailed Dorothea, and pranced along the coast in hot pursuit.

In intervals of rescuing her offspring she explained Lyddy's part in the drama until that quick study was moved to perform heroic deeds in her efforts to rescue what she had erstwhile designated as "that there plank." With cries of anguish, with supplicating hands and expressions of despair, they pursued the tide-flung thing a good mile up the shore. They danced out knee-deep in the spent waves, only to miss it and be chased landward by clamoring breakers. They seized it with wet fingers, only to have it slip from their grasp and be borne to sea again.

Dorothea's imagination was rioting. She would never have recognized herself as a bare-legged child with short, dripping petticoats and dank hair plastered across her face. She was a woman, beautiful and distracted, whose long, black robes and golden hair blew in the wind as she darted to save her child from the hungry, wolf-like waves. Her child! It was there before her eyes—the little, white, drowned face, and appealing arms—so little, so helpless!

With a last, despairing cry Dorothea flung herself prone upon the slippery thing and held it. With the aid of the trusty nurse she tugged it beyond the wave-reach and the two flung themselves panting and exhausted beside it. And lo! the accustomed miracle transpired. It was no longer a little, white, drowned child that lay there; it was only a huge, water-soaked plank that held no interest whatever.

They left it and faced the wind back to the spot where they had left their

shoes and stockings. It was while donning these—the child of nature does not insist upon dry feet—that Dorothea was brought plumb against a problem that she had erstwhile lightly cast aside.

"What time does your folks have dinner?" hinted Lyddy, and there was expectation in her sniff.

Dorothea's brain poised between the horns of a dilemma. She had invited Lyddy to lunch with her and it was manifestly impossible to humiliate a guest by explaining that her presence at the family table would create consternation second only to that arising from the entrance of a leper. Again, Dorothea herself was supposed at this moment to be sedately lunching with Lucy Martin, and Lyddy was hungry. It was not a pleasant moment.

Dorothea's inspired suggestion that they go without dinner, "just to see what it would be like," fell on unappreciative ears. Suddenly Dorothea's distressed brain was illumined. "Come on!" quoth she, and with the stealthy air of one evading justice, she led Lyddy with subtle turns and duckings to the barn. It was not the most cheerful place wherein to house a guest, but Dorothea's intentions were purely hospitable.

The barn was large and cobwebby and poorly lighted. There was a fine disarray of spades and rakes and carpenter's tools, and an ancient buggy that suggested a lean spinster who has seen better days. Into this, as into a protecting cavern, Dorothea persuaded Lyddy to mount. Lyddy protested as Dorothea pushed her over the wheel.

"What do you want me to get in this here wagon for? Ain't we goin' to have no dinner? Say, Dorothe', what you goin' to do?"

"Just you wait," said Dorothea. With desperation at heart she smiled ingratiatingly. "Cross your heart that you won't get down until I come back, and you'll see. We're going to have a picnic out here—lots and lots of things. I'm going for them now—cake and things. Just for fun, you

know, Lyddy. Cross your heart and say you hope you'll drop dead if you don't wait here for me."

Hypnotized, as it were, by Dorothea's earnestness and the vague sense of brooding mystery, Lyddy crossed herself darkly and murmured the prescribed oath, and Dorothea vanished. It seemed hours before she returned, beaming and bulky.

The Casabianca of the buggy met her with reproaches. In her hostess's absence she had run the gamut of emotion from wonder to black rage. Only her absolute conviction that the moment she put foot to the floor she would fall prone and lifeless had held her where she was.

Dorothea's sole greeting was to clamber beside the enraged one—a difficult feat considering that she employed only her legs and one hand, since the other was engaged in clutching the front of her blouse which presented a strangely bag-like appearance. From this, with the air of a necromancer, she proceeded to draw the following menu:

One large piece of raisin-cake, in good condition; five buttered biscuits, crushed but appetizing; the remains of two sardines; a lettuce leaf and a mangled banana.

With the air of a conqueror Dorothea watched Lyddy fall upon these delicacies.

That long-suffering person, not being over-curious, accepted her lunch with enthusiasm and refrained from questioning. For all she knew it might be the custom of these exalted beings known as "cottage folks" to entertain their friends in this original manner; also, to one whose custom it is to consume salt pork thrice daily any meal embracing raisin-cake becomes a festival.

That Dorothea regarded herself with satisfaction was evident, yet the deed she had recently accomplished would yesterday have smacked of thievery and thrilled the admirer of Ellen Adair with horror. Today it was to be regarded as no less than a dashing bit of heroism.

In point of fact Dorothea had simply presented herself at the Martin table when the luncheon of that decorous family was well under way, and announced her intention of sharing it. The mere fact that her general appearance suggested a hobgoblin who has sported too long in a shower, or that Mrs. Martin, a dignified person with eyeglasses, received her with more amazement than enthusiasm, in no wise affected her appetite.

Dorothea's manner in striking contrast to her appearance was bland to the point of suavity. She was gentle, she was polite. She said "Excuse me" several times when there was no occasion for it.

Lucy, a delicate fairy, all white muslin and correct curls, yearned toward her.

"Oh, Dorothea, why didn't you come this morning? I got out all the dolls and cried because you weren't here," she reproached.

"I couldn't get away," said Dorothea. Her tone accused her family of detaining her by force.

Mrs. Martin looked at her guest with surprise. Did the child's parents starve her? she wondered. Dorothea's plate seemed to empty as by magic. Mrs. Martin rang for more biscuit. When the cake appeared she gave Dorothea the largest slice. When she looked the child's way a moment later the cake had disappeared, and Dorothea's hands were fumbling at the sailor blouse. There were crumbs on her collar.

Dorothea waited for no more than the mere glance of suspicion.

"Excuse me," she said politely, and before Mrs. Martin's amazement had formed into words she had reached the door with dignity. From thence she bolted.

Lucy's wail followed her. "Oh, Dorothea, ain't you going to stay and play with me? Oh, Dorothea!"

What was it to that brazen being that she was tabooed the house of Martin from this day forth? No successful diplomat ever thrilled with a greater sense of triumph than Dorothea as she

sat by Lyddy's side and accepted graciously the gift of a sardine tail.

Old John came into the barn and rolled a barrel of potatoes into a corner.

"A peddler!" said Dorothea in a fearful whisper, and though they were both perfectly aware that this was a pure fantasy, it was delightful to crouch in the buggy, clinging to each other, and think that the next moment might find them weltering in their own gore. They followed him from the barn at a safe distance and eluded his murderous designs by scudding beachward.

There Dorothea, true to the paths forbidden, led the way to the summer-house, and with bold defiance to anyone who might be watching from the back windows of her house, clambered to its very top and precipitated herself into space.

Caution induced them to betake themselves presently to the Martins' summer-house and thence to the neighboring ones beyond.

It was wonderful to jump from a lofty place sheer into the wind. It seemed to catch them with swaying arms and lower them gently into the sand. One can be many things jumping from a summer-house roof; a diver going head first into the long, green sea grass for pearls; a fishhawk with swooping wings; a beautiful, pirate-pursued maiden leaping from a precipice, or simply a person who will not take a dare. Dorothea and Lyddy were all and every one in turn while the hours slipped by like disregarded minutes. Scratched and jostled, but hilarious, they finally turned their attention to the sea and raced to the beach.

It was like coming suddenly into a ruined land—a strange, forgotten land where a hundred years before rage and storm had rioted and destroyed. The coast was strewn with driftwood. Great logs, unwieldy pieces of timber and twisted roots appealed in their helplessness like drowned things.

The tide was out, far out. It seemed to have retreated with the going down of the wind like a dog

pulled back on a leash. One could hear only its growling and see the flash of white teeth as it leaped and snarled at the sand bar. The sky was a heavy gray over a gray land. It seemed to Dorothea that she and Lyddy were the only ones alive in a vague and mysterious world. If one had not resolved upon a day of total depravity nothing would have been more delightful than to wander in this waste and ruined place and think strange and beautiful thoughts of how sad it was to have a family with a genius for misunderstanding and how beautiful it would be to die some heroic death and leave them one and all to go through life wasted and haggard with a remorse that came too late. However, one might think these things on days when one's conduct was unimpeachable, and this time of license was nearing its end.

The afternoon was waning. From the distant railroad came the snort and whistle of an engine. The railroad was the village clock, and the dullest child knew every engine on the line by name and could distinguish it by its whistle as easily as a mother recognizes her child by its cry.

"Old Jay Gould's comin'," said Lyddy. "It's six o'clock. Hey, Dorothe', what'll we do now?"

The still grayness of the hour, its gloom and unearthliness suggested to Dorothea's groping brain a dissipation fit from its very enormity to end the day. It was a daring thought. Since the distant time when the story of Pauline and the matches had been impressed upon her infant mind as an awful warning, this one thing above all others had been catalogued as the crime stupendous, and consequently doubly delectable. Dorothea did not hesitate.

"We'll build a bonfire," she said; "a big one. We'll make it by the vacant lots where nobody can see us. There's lots of dry wood on the bluff. You get it, and I'll go to the barn for the matches."

She found them beside the candle that was wont to light old John to his



cot in the loft above. An inspiration caused her to stop at the potato barrel and fill her blouse to bursting. She flew back to the beach exulting.

In her absence Lyddy had worked with enthusiasm. Now together they brought armful after armful of driftwood until the heap grew to majestic proportions. Lyddy, with a whoop of joy, came upon an ancient barrel half-buried in the dry sand. This being promptly excavated proved the crown and glory of the whole.

Dorothea, with the air of a priestess applying the sacrificial torch, approached with the matches. There was a breathless moment, then suddenly a crackling sound, a puff of white smoke and a leap of wavering flame. The fire was a fact.

Presently it grew to be a glorious thing, like a burning ship on a black sea, or a wild sunset in a stormy sky. There was the inspiration of trumpets in its reckless beauty. Dorothea and Lyddy danced about it with shrieks and howling songs—two mad little pagans at play with an element as lawless as themselves. They dared its nearness, running so close to its outstretched red fingers that they were fairly seized and dragged into its beautiful, smothering arms.

The twilight deepened about them as they rioted, and the charitable bluff sheltered the evildoers like a wall from the sight of a righteous world. The fire was a glorious companion.

Dorothea and Lyddy turned gradually from pious souls defying a red witch to an entire tribe of Indians who tossed victims of driftwood into their forest fire and howled joyfully to watch them writhe and blaze.

Little did Dorothea suspect, as in the guise of Pocahontas she valiantly rescued a smoldering log from destruction, that at this very moment consternation had seized upon the parental wigwam.

Where was Dorothea? A maid who had been sent to the Martins' to bring the lingering visitor home returned with a strange story, and being promptly and indignantly despatched

to the Flynn premises brought back only the information—delivered by a small brother swinging on the gate—that Dorothea was not there and Lyddy was somewhere spending the day.

The family waited, their mood changing, as dinner progressed to its final stage, from wrath to alarm. The conversation gradually dwindled to nothingness.

The man of adamant, who had returned to his household some hours before, would have choked before acknowledging his uneasiness as to his offspring's whereabouts, but he watched his wife closely.

The little mother, who had been struggling through her dinner bravely, without warning suddenly threw down her fork and burst into tears. It was the signal for fear to fall upon them openly.

The man of adamant put on his hat and went out into the night. His family followed him, agonized and anxious. Dorothea would have been flattered to the core could she have seen them.

At the moment when neighbors' doorbells were being rung and passers-by detained and questioned, Dorothea and Lyddy were wrapped in calm content. They had lost all reckoning of time, all responsibility of home, and the encircling arm of the bluff shielded them from any searcher who might seek to awaken their interest in either.

The fire had burned down long since to a mass of glowing, purring embers. In these they baked the purloined potatoes, an estatic task. Under ordinary circumstances a red-hot, half-cooked potato, salted only with sand, but that copiously, does not seem a feast for the gods. To Dorothea and Lyddy it approached perfection's self, and they ate until they could eat no more.

Prone on the warm sand, their burning faces to the fire and serenely unaware of the cold air at their ankles, they burrowed, kitten-like, while they told stories. It was wonderful to lie so, while the night deepened and the



sea crooned and grumbled, and hear a graphic account of the littlest sister's last fit.

Dorothea was moved to tell several blood-curdling and purely imaginary experiences. It was only, however, while reveling in the horrors of a peddler story that panic, sudden and irresistible, fell upon them.

Shrieking and scrambling they reached the top of the bluff and rushed pellmell across the vacant lots to the avenue where the protecting lights beckoned and the shadowy form of one with a pack upon his back, who seemed to pursue them ruthlessly, was dispelled.

Once on the highway they felt suddenly what an awesome thing it was to be alone at night. Lyddy turned her face to her own bailiwick.

"Good-bye, Dorothea'. I'm goin' home. Guess you'll catch it fer stayin' out so late—eh?"

She was much surprised when Dorothea grasped her suddenly and imprinted a hard little kiss upon her cheek. How could she know that this farewell was final and forever, or realize that it was pure emotion that caused her friend to vanish so suddenly with no striving for the customary "last tag"?

It was an hour later when Dorothea's family returned. A neighbor or two came with them. The little mother clung to her husband, questioning him always with dark, miserable eyes. The man of adamant was white. When a railroad lies upon one side of a home and an ocean on the other, the unexplained prolonged absence of a child is not to be met with composure.

The servants came in from their fruitless searching, whispering and fearful. Old John among them—lantern in hand—wept openly. Dorothea's father made a step toward the telephone.

"I'll call up headquarters again," he began, and paused. A slip of paper dangled at the end of a string from the telephone itself. It was evidently intended to be thus conspicuous in order instantly to attract the attention of

anyone entering the room. It was a note, written in pencil on a flyleaf of the green Tennyson.

The man of adamant's heart leaped at the sight of the sprawling characters. He twisted it loose and read it aloud while they clustered about him. It was simply a catalogue of sins, the sinner apparently thinking this method preferable to word of mouth. It began abruptly:

I played with Lyddy all day.  
I told lies.  
I stole Mrs. Martin's lunch.  
I waded.  
I went to the breakwater.  
I made a bonfire.

The little mother snatched at the paper in her husband's hand. "Where is she *now*?" she cried.

"There is a postscript," said the man of adamant. He read it with a curious twitching at the corners of his mouth:

I did everything I could think of.  
I don't care much what he does to me.  
I am going to read in bed.

They were on the stairs in a moment.

It is hard for one who comes defiantly to acknowledge her shortcoming to find no better audience than a deserted house. Dorothea's courage had oozed from her as she waited. It was not pleasant to think of waking in the morning with the untold tale upon her soul. With a sudden impulse, she had ripped the page from the book she had secured on her way upstairs, and wiped her sins from her mind by writing them there. In the morning they would know all, and, in the meantime, she would make the most of the moments that remained.

Dorothea's parents checked their headlong rush at their daughter's door. The night lamp, balanced recklessly on a chair at Dorothea's bedside, was smoking gloriously. The room reeked of paraffin. Dorothea lay sweetly sleeping in her huddle of pillows, the green Tennyson clasped open on her breast. A beatific smile played about her mouth. On her face was the expression of a seraph who thinks no evil.

And thus they found her.

# LA TOMBE

Par Jean Reibrach

DANS le coup de vent de son entrée, à cause de l'affolement qui, tout de suite, la jetait vers le lit de son enfant, Gabrielle n'avait pas aperçu d'abord le père de Georges. Le mouvement instinctif qui, devant la face douloureuse et les yeux de délire du petit malade, lui fit chercher autour d'elle, éperdument, une aide, une protection, lui découvrit M. Lorgerel, à l'écart un peu, immobile et grave. Mais, en même temps, elle se sentit glacée. Toute sa détresse se heurtait au mur du passé, à son adultère jamais pardonné, au divorce qui, depuis quatre ans, les séparait.

Reculant presque, elle balbutia :

— Je vous remercie de m'avoir appelée !

M. Lorgerel, avec une courtoisie froide, s'inclina :

— Vous êtes sa mère, madame !

L'état de Georges était inquiétant, presque désespéré. Gabrielle s'installa près de lui, ne le quitta plus. Un fauteuil suffisait à ses courts repos. A peine elle touchait aux aliments que lui portait un domestique. Et la souffrance qui l'étreignait était plus atroce encore dans cette maison si remplie de souvenirs, où elle réparaisait en étrangère, et d'où montait vers elle le reproche des choses. Là, elle était entrée, au jour de son mariage, glorieuse un peu et si doucement émue ; là, elle et son mari s'étaient aimés ; là, était né Georges, et là, par sa propre folie, par son ivresse d'un jour, avait été brisé leur bonheur à tous ! Oh ! oui, à tous, à elle aussi, à elle surtout ! A peine libre, elle se voyait abandonnée par l'homme à qui elle avait tout sacrifié ; sa mère mou-

rait, emportée par le chagrin. Et maintenant, seule, sans autre pensée que son enfant, sans autre raison de vivre que la joie de le revoir de loin en loin, voici qu'elle tremblait de le perdre et qu'elle n'avait même plus un cœur où s'appuyer, une épaule où pleurer !

M. Lorgerel, en effet, s'efforçait d'éviter Gabrielle ; et lorsque tous deux se trouvaient réunis dans la chambre du petit malade, il semblait ignorer sa présence ou lui témoignait la même courtoisie froide qu'au jour de l'arrivée. Si proches, ils continuaient d'être lointains. Le passé, durant les silences lourds, distillait goutte à goutte dans leurs cœurs sa liqueur amère. Et devant la torture de cette chair qui était leur chair, de cet être qui était leur être, le père, parfois, se montrait farouche, hostile, comme si la mère qui, jadis, lui disputait sa part d'affection, lui volait maintenant jusqu'à sa part de douleur même.

Involontairement, une fois, dans le bouleversement d'une crise pendant laquelle ils avaient dû s'entraider, une appellation monta des entrailles de l'homme :

— Gabrielle !

Et elle, une autre fois, s'écria :

— Pierre !

Après l'apaisement de la crise, seulement, ils s'en apercevaient. Mais, de ce qu'il était passé d'oubli, une seconde, dans le vol bref, à peine conscient des syllabes, la réalité les poignait davantage ensuite, par le contraste de ce qui aurait pu être, et qui ne serait jamais.

Non, jamais ! Car le dernier lien qui, si faiblement encore, les unissait, allait

se rompre, se rompait. L'enfant déclinait. Le médecin hocha un front découragé; puis il eut un geste d'impuissance. Et la mort passa.

Pendant deux jours, une stupeur pesa sur M. Lorgetel. Puis il erra seul, ensuite, par la maison vide, devenue si vaste. Le souvenir, la vue d'un vêtement, d'un jouet abandonné lui tiraient des larmes. Il revoyait toujours l'agonie, la pâleur, ensuite, du cher petit mort couché dans son lit. La cérémonie aussi, le son des cloches, les chants liturgiques continuaient de le hanter d'une obsession sans trêve que traversait parfois l'image de Gabrielle. Il se la rappelait comme une chose noire et affaissée. Au bord de la fosse, elle avait jeté un grand cri. C'était tout. Il ne l'avait plus revue, ne la reverrait plus. L'ancienne douleur venue d'elle, un moment remuée au vase troublé de son cœur, achevait de s'abolir, n'était plus, emportée avec le souvenir même dans le grand flot de la douleur nouvelle.

M. Lorgetel, le jour suivant, retourna au cimetière. Comme il s'approchait de la petite tombe, il tressaillit, s'arrêta. Une stèle lui avait masqué Gabrielle. En le voyant, elle se leva, dit, craintive, avec un geste de prière:

— Je vous demande pardon... Je voudrais... pour le marbre...

— Je m'en charge! répondit durement M. Lorgetel.

Une colère jalouse l'avait soulevé. Ainsi, même cette tombe n'était pas à lui seul? Elle était à la mère aussi, et non plus seulement, comme avait été l'enfant, quelque jour çà et là, de loin en loin, mais désormais à toute heure, à toute minute, toujours!

L'air de soumission de Gabrielle pourtant l'apaisait. Il prit conscience de l'injustice de sa révolte; et, pour atténuer la dureté de sa réponse, il ajouta, reprenant la courtoisie grave des jours précédents:

— J'ai vu le marbrier!

Ils se retrouvèrent, silencieux, pendant le travail des ouvriers. Devant le caveau, M. Lorgetel eut une nouvelle révolte, plus âpre. Il songeait qu'un jour, lui aussi, serait couché là, avec

son enfant. Et une question angoissante se leva: Mais la mère?...

Ses notions de la vie se bouleversèrent. L'enfant n'était-il pas à la mère, autant qu'à lui, plus encore qu'à lui?

M. Lorgetel s'efforça d'écarter cette pensée. Mais la tombe, de jour en jour, lui disait la vanité des droits légaux, la vanité de la haine, de l'orgueil. Et il dut reconnaître que le lien qu'il avait cru brisé persistait, indestructible. Déjà leurs fleurs, séparées d'abord, comme hostiles, elles aussi, sur la tombe même, se rapprochaient, se rejoignaient, entremêlaient, après leurs parfums, leurs racines ou leurs corolles. Pour des roses blanches qu'avait portées Gabrielle, il renouvela, à cause du petit mort, l'eau des vases. La main pieuse de Gabrielle rendait aux fleurs que lui-même déposait des soins pareils; et dans cet accord tacite de leur culte, leurs deux pensées devenaient inséparables de la pensée de Georges. D'être si légitime, la tendresse de la mère cessait d'irriter le cœur de l'homme. Au souvenir de son désespoir, du grand cri farouche qu'elle avait jeté au bord de la fosse, il s'inclina devant cette grande douleur que rien ni personne ne semblait devoir consoler. Et, de ce respect de la douleur, renaissait insensiblement un respect de la mère, presque un respect de la femme.

De nouveau, ils se rencontrèrent. Gabrielle, surprise, eut un mouvement de retraite. Il la retint d'un signe, prêt à se retirer lui-même. Timidement, elle offrit:

— Si vous le désirez, je puis changer mes heures?...

— Je vous en prie! refusa M. Lorgetel.

Et tous deux restèrent.

Une fois encore, la tombe, ensemble, les attira. Tristes et doux, ils se saluèrent. Mais le gardien, à ce moment, passait:

— On ferme! annonça-t-il.

Après une hésitation, ils s'acheminèrent en silence, côte à côte, du pas lent des cimetières. M. Lorgetel, à travers

sa gêne, éprouvait un apaisement secret, comme s'il eût été moins seul, une minute, à porter sa douleur, et qu'elle lui fût moins lourde. Et tous deux, sur le seuil, avant de se séparer, furent immobiles un instant, comme s'ils allaient parler.

Ils ne s'évitèrent plus les jours suivants. Il arriva que leurs soins s'unirent, comme ils s'unissaient naguère, auprès du petit malade. M. Lorgerel allait chercher l'eau nécessaire. Leurs fleurs, en mêlant leurs parfums, mêlaient un peu de leurs deux âmes, à travers l'âme de l'enfant. Elles avaient la beauté touchante des fleurs des cimetières, fleurs du passé, fleurs d'oubli, fleurs de pardon.

Un après-midi, M. Lorgerel dut aider Gabrielle à se relever, après sa prière. Elle était si brisée qu'il la conduisit jusqu'à un banc, au bord de l'allée. Emu lui-même, il n'osait la quitter brusquement et cherchait des paroles. Un souvenir lui revint. Il s'informa, témoignant une surprise :

— Mais... Madame votre mère?...

— Je l'ai perdue! répondit Gabrielle.

Et désignant de ses mains tendues la petite tombe blanche devant eux :

— Je suis toute seule, maintenant! gémit-elle désespérée.

M. Lorgerel tressaillit. Seule? Il se borna à donner quelques paroles condoléantes. Mais le passé, dès lors, le ressaisit, l'obséda. Il vit Gabrielle abandonnée, malheureuse... Une mélancolie modifia les aspects des événements lointains. Un reproche lui parut monter de la tombe, et bientôt monta de son cœur même. Des pensées qu'il n'osait accueillir encore l'envahirent d'une douceur croissante. Il se prenait à chercher, dans les arrangements des fleurs, les indices des visites de Gabrielle; et peu à peu, ce fut elle-même qu'il chercha. Longtemps, ce jour-là, il l'attendit. Presque, il avait peur qu'elle ne vint pas. Alors, quand elle fut venue enfin, qu'elle eut achevé de friter, il s'approcha :

— Ainsi, demanda-t-il, vous êtes seule?

Un autre sens, cette fois, s'attachait à ses paroles. Gabrielle comprit: c'était à *l'autre* qu'il songeait.

— Oh! répondit-elle, j'ai toujours été seule, depuis!...

Un frisson la traversa. Elle cacha son visage dans ses mains :

— Oh! pria-t-elle, tout cela est si loin!...

Un silence flotta. Puis, M. Lorgerel, doucement :

— Gabrielle?...

Elle releva le front et dit à son tour :

— Pierre!

Ils se regardèrent, bouleversés. Dans le beau visage de la mère, ravagé de tant de souffrance, M. Lorgerel retrouvait le regard poignant de Georges, et la femme, dans le front du père, dans le pli austère de la bouche, retrouvait les traits de son enfant. Une minute, il n'y eut plus rien, rien que Georges, rien que le cher petit mort qui continuait de vivre en eux, qui les appelait, les inclinait l'un vers l'autre. M. Lorgerel commença :

— Si vous vouliez?...

Un élan de tout le cœur se révéla dans les prunelles de Gabrielle. Puis elle baissa les paupières, un souffle passa ses lèvres :

— Pardon!

Mais déjà Pierre, la voix tremblante un peu :

— Vous voulez bien reprendre votre place?

— Oui! fit le petit souffle de Gabrielle.

Ils se turent, les mains étreintes soudain. Un coup de soleil brusque crevait la nuit de leurs pensées. Ce fut un instant, dans l'harmonie renaissante de leurs cœurs, comme le prolongement d'un son pur de cymbales d'or. Alors :

— Venez! dit M. Lorgerel.

Il la mena devant la tombe. Ainsi, au jour de leur mariage, ils s'étaient agenouillés devant un autel. La bénédiction de l'enfant passa sur leurs fronts inclinés.

Ensuite, ils se relevèrent :

— Ah! soupira M. Lorgerel, je t'aime toujours!

— Je n'ai jamais cessé de t'aimer, dit Gabrielle.

Lui, doucement, l'attirait. La tête contre l'épaule de Pierre, elle s'y appuyait. Son visage, à travers les derniers pleurs, irradiait une tendresse immense. Sa bouche semblait une petite fleur de vie, plus belle et plus douce de s'être ouverte sur une tombe. Pi-

erre, lentement, pieusement, la cueillit, d'un baiser chaste qui purifiait.

Ils n'ajoutèrent rien, dans la grande douceur émue qui tombait des arbres et qui montait des sépultures. Des oiseaux, invisibles parmi les branches, pépiaient à l'infini, dans le soleil couchant; et, d'annoncer les crépuscules, ils annonçaient aussi les aubes.



## THE STROLLING MINSTREL

"MINSTREL, pray you sing of love!"  
 "I shall sing the butterfly  
 Hovering each bloom above,  
 Caught between the earth and sky;  
 Clasp it close, what can I sing?  
 Memory and broken wing."

"Minstrel, sing of love, I pray!"  
 "I will sing you dusk's first star;  
 Night's pale passion strove with day,  
 Set it where all lost things are.  
 Shrine for song, for hope, for pain—  
 Yet, alas, a star must wane!"

"Minstrel, has not love a song?"  
 "I shall sing you as I will;  
 See where summer steals along,  
 Boughs beneath her kisses thrill;  
 Stripped their bloom and desolate  
 In the bitter days that wait."

"Go, then, minstrel, go your way!"  
 "All I had to you I brought,  
 Passion's birth, Life's roundelay,  
 Dark and light in singing wrought,  
 Matin, vesper, chime and knell.  
 Would you have love's song? Farewell!"

VIRGINIA WOODWARD CLOUD.



## REVERSING THE PICTURE

MADGE—Why don't you like a man who is proud of his ancestors?

MARJORIE—Because he is so likely to be one whose ancestors wouldn't be proud of him.



# THE UNEXPECTED HOST

By Pomona Penrin

THE ball at the Bronson-Oakleys' was insufferably stupid. The smoking-room was crowded with the "dancing" men, and those who did not dance picked their way about the border of the polished floor, paying duty visits. Mrs. Bronson-Oakley's balls always were—to speak aloud one of society's resignations—stupid. Yet by a freak of resourceful chance her house had become a place at which it was thought well to be seen, and Bethune, when his idea first occurred to him, remembered that the Other Seven were all present and might be collected by a mere nod.

The Other Seven and Bethune made up a knot of the self-chosen who, by their escapades, munificently provided conversation for the un-elect. They were the little set within a set minus which no society seems able to exist—people upon which no one can frown without being quite frowned down. Moreover, no one actually knew anything of their exploits, beyond having been told by someone who had been told; and in the fairly well-authenticated fragments that did drift about, there was a certain spice of humor and daring that made for itself friends. Nearly everything that they did Bethune planned, not so much from zest—for he had little—as because it was gratefully expected of him, and because he had come to be welcomed as much for the Sinbad of this reputation as for his most likable self.

The Other Seven were Chillingworth, who was said to have a theatre-box put up over the padded stall occupied by his polo pony, so that he could admire in comfort; Mrs. Chillingworth, who seemed to have taken

apartments in a motor; Howdon and his wife, who appeared to have married because they both took no sugar in their coffee, for they had no other taste in common; Kenneth and Mrs. Kenneth, who were like two naughty children ready to do anything that anyone proposed, and devoted to each other; and Mrs. Kenneth's sister, Miss Ennis, who was out of the twenties and was not like the others, save that she must have been or she would not have been numbered with them. This was a paradox over which Bethune was wont to ponder. Miss Ennis had a studio in the top of the Kenneths' house, and this caused Bethune to distrust her. He had no objection to the people who accept society as a recreation and not as a profession, but he had a very honest objection to those who profess society to its face and deny it behind its back, so to speak, by instituting studios in which they do nothing but serve tea. He wondered about Miss Ennis. She was very beautiful.

It was to these seven that the word was passed by Bethune in the midst of the Bronson-Oakley ball, and Bethune himself was last to arrive among them in a selected corner of the supper-room. No one said anything, but the lift and droop of an eye was speech among the Seven—rather, among the six, for Miss Ennis comprehended everything without, so to speak, the aid of her features, and she never deliberately permitted her face to light to show how receptive she was. Bethune, on the other hand, smiled often and adorably upon everyone, with an exposition of dimples.

As soon as no one was near an expectant silence fell upon the Other

Seven, for they foresaw that Bethune was about to rescue them. Bethune set down his plate with infinite deliberation, and took out his key-ring. He selected and held up a common-place little latchkey.

"It'll get us out of this," he assured them, smiling.

"How?" cried little Mrs. Kenneth, who rushed in prettily—perhaps because she always "dared to tread"!

"Uncle Philip Nome has gone up to Boston to sail for foreign parts," he answered. "No one is in his house but the caretaker. I thought that we might have a little supper——"

The Other Seven gasped a little in their smiles—rather, the other six, for Miss Ennis simply nodded. Here was a proposition after everyone's own heart. For the Nome house was the great, mysterious mansion which, within the mind of man, society had never entered, though it would have gone gladly had there ever come a summons.

"Bethune!" cried Chillingworth affectionately. "By gad, you're perfect pleasure to me. So the old gentleman's off for Europe again, eh? Let's have the supper in the court. They say he's got a court *à la Pompeii*, and those fellows—eh?"

"I'll toddle on first," said Bethune practically, "and light up. You get over as soon as you can."

To Mrs. Bronson-Oakley he made regretful adieux, standing with that little deferential stooping of the shoulders that won his way to the hearts of dowagers, long-accustomed to respect, but long strangers to such tender homage. Something of his manner—a penitential tribute for early departure—was in the good-byes of the others, spoken at such decent intervals that Mrs. Bronson-Oakley, whose mind was a blank all through her own entertainments, suspected no apostasy. Thus in the course of half an hour the Other Seven had slipped down the Avenue, two blocks or more, and were admitted to the silent house of Mr. Philip Nome.

It was a magnificent home, built years before when Philip Nome had

taken unto himself a wife. Less than a year afterward they had gone abroad together, and the house had remained closed for a space. When its owner had returned, he stated merely that his wife had "remained abroad." No one had seen her since. The master of the desolate mansion had caused it to be refurnished and filled with beautiful things which only his little circle of bachelor friends and Bethune had ever seen. For forty years the house had remained closed to all but these few, and ever since Bethune could remember it had been sealed and boarded for long intervals of absence. None of the Seven had ever set foot within its portals.

Because at all times the Seven courted mirth, they entered the great hall with much laughter, as became the moment. Afterward they remembered it as a great cave of a place, paneled in oak to the frescoed ceiling and leading by marble steps to the court in the centre of the house. The court, tiled in colored marble, its glass roof supported by white pillars, held a little fountain, now silent, though the aquatic plants in its basin were green and thrifty. The salon, its furniture not yet covered for the master's absence, was a room dedicated to art and to all beauty, and the Seven, vaguely aware of the presence of a great deal about which they were content to know nothing, hurried back to the court where it had been agreed to have supper brought. All but Miss Ennis. She waited in the salon, standing silently before one shrine after another; and there Bethune found her when he returned from the café where he had ordered supper.

She did not hear him enter, and she did not turn from the picture to which her face was raised. Bethune delighted in her slim beauty against the somber furniture.

"Do you like it?" he asked.

She looked at him swiftly, without speaking. They stood together for a moment before a canvas that was all spring and wild-flowers and happy faces, and then before a porch sunk

in honeysuckle, and before the picture of a little girl with a thorn in her foot. Bethune watched Miss Ennis, wondering, and he wondered the more when, a burst of laughter coming from the others, she turned to him with her eyes filled with tears.

"The picture—that picture of spring," she said uncertainly, a curious wistfulness in her eyes and mouth. "It makes one wish——"

There was a clamor of gay defense and protest in the court, and above it all Chillingworth's drawl rose pleasantly. Miss Ennis heard, and looked up at Bethune with a little laugh that was half-defiant.

"Oh, do let us find out what all that is about!" she cried. "Toby Chillingworth has said something delicious."

They reached the door in time to be rewarded by the sight of little Mrs. Kenneth posing prettily on the urn in the centre of the fountain.

"A blue silk naiad, by Jove!" Chillingworth went on, "with her hair parted on the side. A New York naiad-lady!"

Miss Ennis listened and laughed, and ran down among them.

"Oh, Toby!" she cried. "You be a dolphin—do! You would make a stylish dolphin, with curls!"

While supper was arriving and being arranged Bethune watched Miss Ennis, still wondering. It had grown to be a habit with him, this puzzling over her, and he hardly realized what a delight it was, as well. But somehow, that moment in the salon, when her eyes had filled with tears before the pictures, went to Bethune's head like wine, and by the same token he suddenly realized that he cordially hated all the rest of his guests and never wanted to see any of them again. Whereupon he smiled at them all, with his exposition of dimples, and sent the waiters away.

"We're going to do this thing our own little selves," he said genially, "our own little way."

So everyone dragged forward the marble benches from about the walls, and made of them tables, and piled the

floor with cushions from the salon. Bethune sat at the head of the table and Mrs. Chillingworth at the foot.

"And the Bronson-Oakley ball," murmured Chillingworth unenviously, carving a fowl, "is still worrying on. Bethune, Bethune, savor of situations, I salute you! I kiss your hand!"

Mrs. Howdon leaned her beautiful, petulant face on her palms.

"Aren't we happy?" she inquired contentedly. "I was never so happy in my life. Why can't we sit here, at supper, right along?"

Howdon, with his tired, handsome face and sad eyes, looked, to tell the truth, anything but happy, but it had been several years since Mrs. Howdon had ceased to notice that.

"Greedy!" he said, with good-natured willingness to make a jest. "I thought," he put it plaintively, "that I provided liberally for her comfort, and now she prefers the tent of a stranger."

"Ah, this," said Chillingworth frankly, "is bully *and* immense. That's what it is, both bully and immense. But what, I wonder, would his Hermitship say to it?"

"Uncle Philip?" asked Bethune. "He wouldn't care—just so long as he didn't have to be present. I believe that he would have given dozens of parties if he could have stayed in the furnace-room."

Mrs. Kenneth burst into a little lilt of song, the glasses touched about the board, and Bethune and the Other Seven entered upon one of their most masterly revels. The liberation from an evening which had promised only stupidity to this bizarre entrance to a stranger's house, and a house which had so long piqued curiosity, appealed to them all, and the court and the salon and the silent hall and even the dark upper corridors echoed their jollity. It would have been a difficult business for anyone in the haunted upstairs room who had chanced to be asleep.

In an hour Chillingworth, his face flushed, sprang to the marble rail of the fountain and held up his glass.

"To the health," he cried, "of the Master of the House! Heaven bless his heart!"

"To the Master of the House!" cried everyone, and, following Chillingworth's example, their glasses crashed into the still waters of the fountain's basin.

"My friends, I thank you," said a quiet voice.

Low as it was, everyone turned instantly to the doorway from whence it came. There, leaning against a pillar at the head of the flight of marble steps, stood a man of sixty-odd years, with iron-gray hair and sad, kindly eyes. He wore a black dressing-coat and carried a pen in his hand, as if he had been interrupted at some writing.

Bethune hurried forward.

"Uncle Philip!" he cried, and hesitated in an amazement that was almost abject. "Didn't you sail?" he added, somewhat idiotically.

The others stood speechlessly in their places. The coming of a ghost could not so have alarmed them as this appearance in their midst of one who had been for years a name to them all, and who, long wedded to his seclusion, now found them uninvited guests in his own house.

He came slowly down the steps and, though he smiled, he did not touch Bethune's outstretched hand.

"We were all at the Bronson-Oakley ball, sir," said Bethune hurriedly, "and, as usual, it was insufferably stupid. I was certain that you had left, and it occurred to me to accept the permission——"

Mr. Philip Nome sat down in a great carved chair, and lifted his hand in protestation.

"Not a word," he said graciously. "It gives me pleasure to have the house used. It has been," he added, "like a grave for years—uncommonly like a grave. No, I find that I am not sailing. Present your friends, Bethune."

Bethune, reassured by his uncle's matter-of-fact and cordial manner, said over the names, and the old man

acknowledged each with a courtly graciousness.

"Chillingworth?" he said musingly. "Alexander Chillingworth's son, I suppose? He and I were at school together. And Howdon—your uncle and I built a railroad somewhere once. The Ennis girls!" he scanned the faces of Mrs. Kenneth and Miss Ennis with a curious wistfulness. "Your mother, Alice Clough, was a very beautiful woman," he said gently, "as beautiful as you."

The others had resumed their seats and Bethune, filling the only remaining glass, placed it at the old man's elbow. The Seven, because of the goblets smashed in the fountain, sat idle. Mr. Philip Nome, whose face was as pale as the marble walls, touched his lips to his glass and smiled about him.

"So the ball at the Bronson-Oakleys' was stupid?" he said, smiling. "Ah, yes, I know. Like old Peter Oakley's after-dinner speeches of forty years ago, I dare say. You did well to escape. I am proud that my house has been your refuge. And here you seem very gay—very gay. Are you happy?"

The Seven sought how not to look their astonishment. It was Chillingworth who came to the rescue.

"We are happy to be your guests, Mr. Nome," he said courteously.

The old man nodded.

"As I supposed—as I supposed," he said quietly. "Happy in your retorts—and no happier. That is the sum of the happiness of a great deal of society."

"I have been happy with your pictures, sir," said Miss Ennis suddenly. She had withdrawn a little from the others, and sat on the rail of the fountain nearest their unexpected host.

The old man's face lighted. He nodded slightly.

"Ah," he said, "Alice Clough's daughter would be happy with my pictures. I used to think——"

His eyes rested above and beyond the others, and he fell silent as if he had forgotten their presence.

"What if I were to tell you about it,"

he said absently, "here, in this room, after all these years?"

Bethune watched his uncle in vague alarm. He was at a loss to account for the absence of the servants, since their master was still in the house. Yet he might have dismissed them, expecting to leave that day and, at the last moment, changed his mind. Bethune noted with amazement that, in spite of his pallor, his uncle had never looked more youthful.

A chorus of polite, murmured assent sounded from the others, which the old man hardly heard. He was turning the stem of his wineglass in his fingers and smiling as a man will smile who holds pleasant communion with faces unforgotten.

"So here are the Ennis girls—in my house," he said. "Did you know," he asked simply, "that I loved your mother?"

Mrs. Kenneth's piquant little face, startled from its piquancy, yet remained without expression. Miss Ennis suddenly sat erect.

"You are 'Philip'!" she cried wonderingly. "We never knew—we found a package labeled 'Letters from Philip' among her things. My father burned them unopened."

His face softened.

"I am glad that she kept them," he said gently. "There could be no harm in that to anyone. We are all friends," he continued, smiling about at the rest and lifting his glass, "I am sure of that, for one is never so merry as you, save among friends—laughter, real laughter enemies never share, you know. And tonight I have a fancy to tell you about this, in the little time that we have left together."

Again he touched the glass to his lips, but the wine still foamed to the glass's brim. Little Mrs. Kenneth's face was a study. Her mother had died but two years ago, and this news of her, at such a time—she looked fearfully at her sister. Miss Ennis was waiting for the old man to begin, her face soft with its eagerness.

"I built this house," said Philip Nome, "in the year before my mar-

riage. For four years and more I had loved your mother"—he seemed quite to have forgotten the presence of his nephew and his friends and spoke only to the two who had called back the past—"and I had asked her to share this home with me. Sometimes, now, I wonder how I had the wit to love her. She was not like the rest of us. We were a gay crowd, concerned with getting what we called 'the best out of life,' and we assumed that we knew what the best was. We ran away together whenever we could—a dozen or so of us, with some gay young married people, and we dined and supped in out-of-the-way places, and gave fancy-dress dinners, and shocked our betters for our own amusement—all to get 'the best out of life.'

"When this house was finished, we planned to have a royal house-warming, at which only we twelve were to be present, and a sister of mine who was to be the head of the house until, as I hoped, your mother would take her place. Your mother was one of us, I believe, for the sake of the brother who died shortly after I went abroad. She was devoted to him and she tried to make his tastes her own. But she was never like us—only, she loved life and gaiety and change, and gradually we drew her in among us until she had half accepted us. But I think that I always knew her innate goodness and fineness, and I knew how little she had in common with us. And because—it may be—a man always believes himself better than he is, I was sure that I myself shared her ideals. Only, while I was young, I wanted to 'get the best out of life.' This weakness in me may have been what made her hesitate—for I have always hoped and believed that we loved each other truly. At all events, up to the night that this house was opened, she had not withheld from me her betrothal promise.

"We were very gay that night. As I stood here in the doorway just now I could have sworn that it was that old night, come back again. The supper-table was spread where yours is, and the laughter was much the same—



laughter is terribly alike. One of us, I remember, stood on the urn of the fountain, and posed as a statue, and we drank a toast to the mistress of the house, and broke our glasses in the fountain. In the height of the merriment I saw Alice—your mother—slip away to the salon. I followed her, and I found her standing before a painting that you may have noticed—a spring landscape that is all leaves and sun and youth. I remember how she turned to me.

"Philip," she said, "I want to go away, I want to go away. I hate tonight—and I hate you!"

"I didn't understand—isn't it queer how, even when we know, we yet never understand until it is too late? So I tried to reason with her. I tried to tell her that I loved her—that together we could make what we would of life. But I think she knew better than I. I went to her next day, and many days after that, but I never saw her again. Because she steadily refused to see me I believed that she loved me—and to that hope I clung. But she married a better man than I, and I married one of those among us who seemed able to 'get the best out of life.' In Italy she left me. As for me, I had taken 'the best out of life' for so long that there was little left."

When he ceased speaking, the silence of the others was profound, save for a sob from little Mrs. Kenneth. Miss Ennis and Bethune, with pale faces, sat with eyes fixed on the old man.

Old Philip Nome rose slowly, smiling a little.

"I wonder," he said, with a look about that was almost bewildered, "why I came here to tell you all this? Perhaps it was because Alice Clough seemed to me to be here. Perhaps because you all seem to be like spirits, risen from the dead of that other supper in this court. Perhaps—you are! Who knows?"

He waved his hand pleasantly, and mounted the steps.

"Good night," he said, "I have

much to do. Good night. And the best of life to everyone!"

They heard his muffled footsteps die away, and when Bethune came to himself and sprang to the door, the great hall was empty. It was then that little Mrs. Kenneth broke down and sobbed on her husband's shoulder, and the others rose, and Miss Ennis and Bethune turned and looked in each other's faces.

Bethune's touch was very tender as he wrapped her cloak about her while the rest were making ready, almost in silence. No one cast a backward look at the disordered table, or at the glasses broken in the fountain, or at the goblet standing, as if it had been untasted, at the old man's place.

"May I come tomorrow?" asked Bethune.

"Yes," said Miss Ennis.

"I want to talk—about the picture of spring," said Bethune slowly, that there might be no mistake.

"I know," said Miss Ennis swiftly, "I know."

Early the next morning, Bethune went round to his uncle's to apologize and to help him off, if he meant to go that day. He found the outer door ajar and some strangers in the hall. The caretaker met him. Philip Nome had died in the night.

His valet had gone to the train with his master's bags, and had followed his unvarying instructions to wait, without question, until the latter should arrive. The valet had waited, faithfully, from the middle of the afternoon until after the midnight train had gone. Then he had ventured to return home, and creep into the house.

"He found Mr. Nome in his sitting-room, sir," said the caretaker. "He wore his dressing-coat, and had fallen forward at his desk, with his pen in his hand."

"At what hour did he die?" asked Bethune, trembling.

The man shook his head.

"We don't know yet, sir," he said.



# THE PARTY OF THE FIRST PART

By Gelett Burgess

AS Merioneth walked up the quiet, deserted road his steps grew slower and slower. The night was warm and full of odors. Overhead the full moon sailed out from behind a mass of clouds into the unfathomable blue of the heavens, changing in a moment the dull obscurity of the suburban scene into strikingly accented masses of light and shade. The estates were large, in this vicinity, and the houses far apart. The trees that lined the road shut the pathway in a deep shadow, but this was a familiar and well-loved part of town, and he had much to think over. At one end of a long, stone wall he paused, then seated himself.

No one was in sight, and all was still about him except for a slight rustling of the trees overhead. He had rested for some time, going over and over in his mind what had happened that day, when, from a church-tower nearby, the bell struck with a clangor that startled him. He counted the strokes—it was midnight. The sound ended in decreasing, tremulous vibrations, and the silence closed in again.

He looked about him irresolutely, undecided whether to continue up the street or to return. At last he stood up and looked about him. His eye, aimlessly questing the scene, fell upon the lawn on the other side of the wall, and rested at last, caught by the reflection upon the polished surface of some small object half-hidden in the grass. He vaulted to the inside of the inclosure without removing his gaze, walked over and picked up what he had seen.

It was a short Japanese knife, with a cheaply carven ivory handle, tied with red cord, the sort that is commonly sold to tourists for paper-cutters. He examined it curiously. Its blade was sharp, and stained with irregular spots of something that had dried upon the steel. They showed almost black in the moonlight, but Merioneth knew that it was blood. He sickened at the horror of it, the suggestion of crime—possibly murder—was so frightful. If blood, it had surely taken a deep and cruel wound to leave such a fearsome stain. He held it for some time, trembling, wondering what to do.

Some little distance away stood a large, three-story brick house partly hidden among the trees. Merioneth walked to it cautiously, even stealthily. No windows were lighted that he could see, but, to assure himself, he passed round to the rear and inspected the place carefully. He saw no sign of life, until, reaching the far wing of the building, he thought he noticed a light in a third-floor window. Even as he looked it went out, so quickly that he was uncertain whether or not he had indeed really seen anything. He returned to the front of the house.

Here he again hesitated, wondering what he should do. He still held the knife in his hand, and it needed but one more shuddering look at it for him to make up his mind. The street was still deserted, so far as he could see, but the moon had withdrawn behind a heavy drift of cloud. The lighted window made him anxious, but he decided to investigate.

He made his way up the front steps and across the veranda with infinite

caution to prevent his footsteps being heard. At the front door he listened attentively for some time, but heard nothing but the quiet ticking of a clock somewhere inside.

Four French windows opened upon the veranda, two upon each side of the front door. He crept noiselessly to the nearest one of those on the right. From the ground it had appeared dark, but now he could see through a narrow slit of the closely drawn curtain that a dim light burned in the room. He could even see part way into the room, and what he saw was enough to make his heart beat still more violently, excited though the investigation had already made him. Near the window was a chair overturned upon the floor; beyond that, the lacy edge of a chiffon skirt, a bit of silk stocking and a woman's delicately shod foot, the rhinestone buckle of its shoe shining like a spark in the gaslight. Its position showed that a woman was lying stretched upon the carpeted floor, but whether alive or not Merioneth could not tell.

There was no other way, now; he must enter the house. This first dreadful glimpse of what he was to see unnerved him, and for some minutes he could not think calmly. Then he summoned his courage, and tried the window. It was fastened securely. He tried the other, with the same result. He tiptoed back to the front door, and, for a moment, laid his hand to the bell, but did not ring. Then it occurred to him to try the handle of the door, and the latch turned easily.

Inside, he again waited for a trembling interval, motionless, but with tense muscles, listening for some sign of life upstairs. There was still no sound save the steady ticking, till with a whirr and a rattle a cuckoo clock cried out with shocking clearness. Merioneth, starting in sudden affright, dropped the knife. The clatter of its fall upon the hardwood floor added to his alarm. Then, recovering his composure with a mighty effort, he turned to the door upon his

right. It was closed, and he silently and carefully moved the handle.

It swung slowly back under his touch, and Merioneth stepped softly into the room. It was a library, furnished with rows of book-shelves that went completely round the walls. In the centre was a huge table, littered with papers and magazines, some of which had fallen to the floor. Merioneth gave one glance at the white-clad figure lying upon its back in front of a leather easy-chair, then walked rapidly to the chandelier and turned on the lights. At first he dared not look steadily at the body. In his horror the thought came to him that he might still escape from the scene before anyone could find him, and leave all as he had found it, for someone else to discover. But he put this craven idea out of his head with a scorn of his weakness.

He stooped and examined the woman upon the floor, to ascertain her condition. She had a dark, handsome, proud face, now pale as death. Her eyelids were closed, but her little red lips were slightly parted, disclosing a row of even, blue-white teeth. Her disordered black hair swept in waves about her head and partially hid the opening of her low-cut gown. Her hands, one of which wore a solitaire diamond ring, were clasped over her breast and were streaked with blood which, escaping from some wound, had flowed over the chiffon and ribbons, collecting in a dark pool beneath her.

Gently sweeping the heavy mass of hair from her breast, Merioneth looked to see if she were still breathing. He thought he detected the slightest and slowest possible rise and fall of her white bosom, and, with the wild hope that she might still be restored to life he drew the little hands aside and cut gently down the front of her dress to lay bare the wound. He found it at last, and at the sight he sickened. It had evidently just escaped her heart—a little lower and it would have killed her instantly. From the gash a sluggish current still oozed; he placed his

handkerchief over the spot, knowing no way to bandage it, at present.

Next, he gently raised the girl's head and placed a sofa-cushion beneath it, not daring to lift her to the couch, lest he should cause the wound to bleed more profusely. There was a siphon and a decanter with glasses in a tray upon the table; he removed the serviette, drenched it with soda-water and with this he dabbled the girl's brow and wrists. He put the decanter to her lips, but could not make her swallow.

His efforts to revive her, so far, seemed hopeless. Yet she was still warm; there must be some way to save her life, if he could but bring her out of her swoon. He worked over her indefatigably for a few minutes, then rested, to await eagerly some sign of returning consciousness. To his delight a faint glow began to suffuse her pale cheeks. Then the motion of her breathing increased in vigor, and her eyelids fluttered.

Suddenly, as he gazed in rapt anxiety, his ear caught the sound of creaking floor-boards. A stair creaked—then another. Merioneth turned a haggard face to the door, too desperately absorbed in his endeavor, now, to fear. No one appeared; he renewed his attentions to the girl who lay before him, fighting for life. Her bosom heaved and her breath came faster, and she moaned softly as she awakened into a consciousness of pain.

Beads of sweat stood out on Merioneth's forehead as he watched her heartrending struggle, as the conflict between life and death was played out on the girl's face. Vaguely, as if from miles away, or as if he were but dreaming, he heard the footsteps descend, pause, and descend again. He knew there was someone lurking behind the door—what did it matter?

He loved the girl now, loved her with a passion and unselfishness that made him care little for his own danger. Her state was so pitiful, her safety now so dear to him, that he did not care what became of himself, if, by any possible exertion or sacrifice, she could

be made to live—if she could be made to come to herself even long enough to gaze into his eyes and read his loving message to her. She must not die before she had looked upon him, and known his heart.

A tremor passed through her body, and her hands moved convulsively. Then, setting his heart to beating with longing, her eyes opened, and she looked at him, questioningly.

Before he had time to speak, a man stepped quickly into the room. He was a man of some fifty years, with white hair and white mustache, and he had evidently been awakened from sleep, for he wore a long bathrobe and slippers upon his bare feet.

"What's the matter?" he cried in a strained, querulous voice. "What are you doing there?" And then, as he saw what was on the floor, "Oh, my God!"

He came over and knelt beside the girl, taking her hand and pushing Merioneth aside.

"What does this mean? What in heaven's name has happened? Alice! Oh, Alice!" His face had gone as white as his hair. His eyes stared in horror, and his mouth had fallen open. He looked ten years older now than at first.

The girl put her hand to her breast with a moan. Then she looked from one to the other of the men in dazed perplexity. But she looked longest at Merioneth, whose gaze had never once left her, who watched her with his soul in his eyes. To his message of love an answer seemed to come at last, as she struggled into a realization of what had happened, and what she now saw before her. She smiled faintly, and then turned to the older man.

"I have been very foolish, father, that's all," she said slowly and with great effort. "I tried to kill myself—but I'm afraid I didn't quite succeed." The exertion of saying these few words weakened her, and she closed her eyes with an expression of pain.

Merioneth reached for the decanter and forced it between the girl's teeth. "Go and telephone for a doctor!" he

exclaimed to the old man. "She's stabbed horribly, but perhaps we can save her! Hurry!"

The old man still stared stupidly at his daughter. "I don't understand—how—why——"

"Quick! A doctor, quick, for God's sake, or she'll bleed to death! I'll attend to her here!" cried Merioneth, and he pulled the father to his feet, pushing him toward the door. Before he came back to the girl the old man's wits had returned, and slippered feet were heard running up the stairs.

Merioneth threw himself again upon the floor beside the girl and, placing his arms tenderly about her, pressed his lips to hers.

"Alice! Oh, Alice!" he moaned. "Can you forgive me? Come back to me and forgive me, dear! I was insane with jealousy—I didn't know what I was doing! It was because I loved you so, Alice! I wish I had died before I struck you so cruelly—how could I have done it? I shall kill myself if you die, dear! I believe in you—I shall trust you forever—I know you are true! Oh, my poor, beautiful girl, can't you forgive me?"

The slippered feet had already pattered down the stairs again. In another moment the old man entered the room—but not before the girl had placed her little hand in Merioneth's, and had smiled lovingly into his eyes.



## RESPIRE

DIM breaks the dawn across these highlands fair,  
 Dark pinnacles of hemlock stirless stand  
 Watching the rosy-clouded light expand  
 Through still, frost-sweetened air.

Twin desert palms have not a solitude  
 More deep than ours; yet where is kin more dear  
 Than the wild brother-life that round us here  
 Is waking in the wood?

A little while with Love and Life we stay,  
 And here God's peace a little while we know  
 Ere the world claims us, and afar we go  
 Where leads the thorny way.

In nights to come, close-housed, this mortal frame  
 Shut from the stars for which we fainting pine,  
 Shall not the spirit climb to this wild shrine  
 And light again its flame?

EMMA BELL MILES.



## LINGERING HOPE

ASSISTANT—Shall we stop his paper? He's away behind.  
 RURAL EDITOR—Well, he paid something on account about two years ago.  
 Sometimes history repeats itself.